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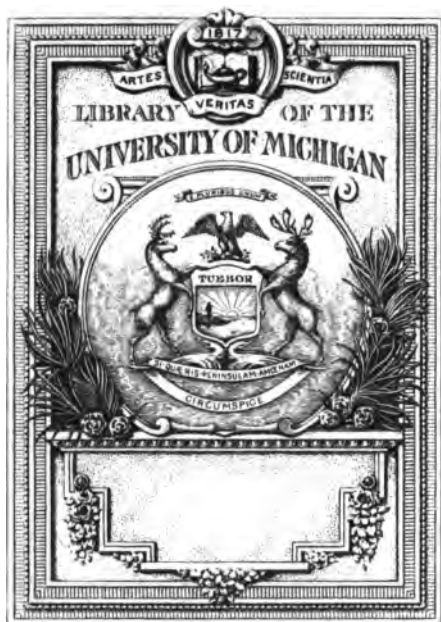
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SITHRON,
THE STAR-STRICKEN.

Horne, Richard Henry

SITHRON,
THE STAR-STRICKEN.

Translated
(ALA BEREKET ALLAH)
from an ancient Arabic Manuscript,

by
SALEM BEN UZÄIR,
of Bassora.



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for SALEM BEN UZÄIR
(ala bereket Allah.)



Prelusive Key-Note.

THE discovery, and publication by translations into English, Polish, German, Portuguese, and other languages, of this ancient Arabic Manuscript, will in due time, it is believed, work a far greater change in two of the most important theologies of the world, than any publication since the Martyrdom on the Cross of the great Jewish Revolutionist,—the divinely human Founder of Christianity. This opinion, it is scarcely needful to say, alludes expressly to the Jewish and Christian religions. And this change will be wrought by the gradual union, or at least the closer amalgamation of the Hebrew and Christian races in all parts of the earth; thus promoting and immensely increasing the welfare and the happiness of both.

The first step to this will be the recognition and adoption of a more pure and Universal idea of the OMNIPOTENT POWER than has hitherto been developed and received. Among other things, a most important commencement of this will be the destruction of all belief in an imaginary Covenant between JEHOVAH and the man Abraham, in the first instance, some 4000 years ago, which is as barbarous and absurd as any of the former customs of savages on islands of the Pacific, or elsewhere. The hardened insensibility of the English public mind at this day (and long since), is curiously and hideously displayed in all our most popular Almanacks, wherein the so-called *Covenant* is coupled on the first day of

each year with *Dog-licenses*, or other incongruous announcements ! What on earth has any Christian community to do with such a fanaticism ?

That the Hebrew race will always remain, in some respects, a distinct race from all other people, seems very probable ; but our friends and countrymen, the modern Jews, will not be able eventually to resist, escape, and continue to hold themselves aloof from the grand evolutions of thought and public opinion on theology and social customs, as well as other matters, that must follow and inevitably tend to bring the long-divided races into closer and more amicable relations.

All this is already entertained, if not contemplated, by a number of highly educated and intellectual Jews of the present day, such as the son of the Rabbi Nathan Adler, by Sir Moses Montefiore, by Sir Julian Goldsmid, by Mr. Claude Montefiore, and others who may be designated as reformed and reforming Jews.

Let me offer a word concerning this Arabic manuscript. The original writers of some of the grandest and most touching poetry ever given to the world, are unknown ; and the dates of their composition are unknown. I allude more especially to the PSALMS, and to the BOOK OF JOB. The Hebrew flatterers who assigned the Psalms to the hand of the warlike King of Israel, are also unknown. No one therefore can be surprised that the writer of this Arabic narrative of "Sithron" is unknown. He appears, however, to have been an Arabian Jew, of about a century and a half after the death of the great Jewish Martyr on Calvary, although his historical materials were evidently derived from Hebrew writings of the time of David, or not long after.

Touching the present translation, the reader must understand that it is faithfully done. The English Editor, how-

ever wishes to say a word as to his own very subordinate part of the work. Inasmuch as the Baghavad-Gheeta and other Sanskrit writings contain many speculations in metaphysics and other developments of modern thought, the reader of this translation, by Salem ben Uzäir (himself being also an Arabian Jew), need not be surprised at finding, now and then, similar precursive efforts of human intelligence; and the English Editor admits that he has sometimes put such speculations in a prominent light. But they are all there: the spirit of the original has never been tampered with.

And now with reference to the opinion of Salem ben Uzäir, as to the wide spreading and important effect the publication of "SITHRON the Star-Stricken," will produce. The modern student will naturally, if not sternly, say "This looks like prodigious presumption, or else the hallucination of an over-wrought imagination; well-meaning perhaps, but as mad-headed as the benighted SITHRON, the leading character of this strangely awakening and pathetic narrative. I see no likelihood of such a result!" You do not? "Indeed I do not." Very well.

A certain conqueror of modern times was in conference with one of his great officers, who disputed the coming of a very important event, which the emperor clearly foresaw. "But I do not see it!" exclaimed the great officer. The emperor then led him to a window, through which the sun was shining at mid-day. "Do you see that star shining up there?" The officer smiled, as at a pleasantry. "Indeed I do *not*, Sire!" The emperor calmly turned away, with "Very well: I *do*." He knew the star he meant, must be there!

THE ENGLISH EDITOR.

Sithron, the Star-stricken.

CHAPTER I.

- 1 Of the Astrologer Zelopholek. 2 His nightly studies of the stars. 3 Of his loving wife Mehetabel, and their child. 4 How the boy shall be named. 5 Death of Mehetabel. 6 The boy Sithron watcheth the stars by the side of his father, who wisheth to teach him astrology. 7 But Sithron followeth after vain imaginings.*

Now while Saul was King of Israel, but engaged in his last wars with the Philistines, there dwelt an astrologer in the City of Hebron, whose name was Zelopholek.

2 And this man was in great repute as an astrologer, so that he was held in estimation throughout a considerable part of the land of Judah.

3 And in the City of El-Kalil, so called by the Arabs, or Kirjath-arba, or Carioth-arba, which was afterwards called Hebron, there was no soothsayer by the stars equal unto him.

4 And Zelopholek was very poor; for although men of substance came to visit him,

even from distant parts, they did not give him money or jewels or raiment, for they considered that he could surely obtain such things, if he needed them, by consulting the stars.

5 And Zelopholek would not gainsay this opinion lest it should injure his reputation, for he was of a proud spirit.

6 So he, and his wife Mehetabel, were sometimes without the means of obtaining sufficient food.

7 But Mehetabel was a loving wife, and never complained of anything ; for they loved each other greatly.

8 And she bare him a son, whom Zelopholek proposed to call Nejmeb Safiyeh, which in the Arabic signifieth *Clear Star*, as a record of a new star which he had discovered on the morning of the birth of the child.

9 But Mehetabel, being told by her husband that this Arabian name often signifieth a girl child, preferred that he should choose another ; and Zelopholek then chose Bar-Kochbah, or Son of Stars, while the other name should also live in their thoughts.

10 And from this name also Mehetabel turned aside, thinking it might lead the child into ambition and sorrow ;

11 The more so, when Zelopholek told her

he foresaw that name would be great in future ages.

12 And Mehetabel asked that the boy's name should be *Sithron*, because that she had concealed him from her husband, and made her pregnancy a mystery as long as she could, on account of their poverty.

13 So the child was called Sithron; but they would ever hold in memory the other two names which Zelopholek had first proposed.

14 Now Mehetabel had long been accustomed to sit on the house-top all night, and during the time before dawn, by the side of her husband, watching the stars with him, and listening to his words;

15 But not having had enough food during a time of cold weather, she fell sick, and soon afterwards died.

16 And Zelopholek mourned for her exceedingly.

17 Now the boy Sithron, when he came to be of sufficient years to understand, was accustomed to sit at his father's feet on the house-top, watching the stars.

18 And great were the pains Zelopholek bestowed upon the boy, to teach him to become in course of years, a great astrologer like unto himself.

19 But the bright mind of Sithron, after a time, fled away from his father's teachings, and went astray in vain imaginings among his stars, and among other fields of stars.

CHAPTER II.

1 Of the boy Sithron. 2 He ceaseth to listen to his father's words at night, for his thoughts are not those of astrologers.

3 He even imagineth that some of the larger stars may be worlds. 4 At length he maketh confession to his father.

Now the youth Sithron was of a grave and comely aspect ; one who spake little, but he was of a loving heart ;

2 And for that he was very fair, and of a gentle and modest mien, some of the neighbours, who chanced to have heard the name that his father first proposed to give him, declared that indeed he ought to have been a girl rather than a boy, and to have had the name of Nejmeb Safiyeh ;

3 Hearing which, Sithron would retire with troubled blushes, but without words.

4 Now the youth, continuing to sit at his father's feet on the house-top at night, tried to listen to his words, yet often he only heard that Zelopholek was speaking, without truly hearing his father's words :

5 For his thoughts strayed away beyond the stars that could be seen, and among stars that he fancied might be shining far beyond his sight.

6 And oft-times he said unto himself, not daring to speak this aloud to his father, Peradventure some of the largest of those stars may be small bodies of shining earth, in some sort like unto this earth upon which we live, only brighter?

7 Moreover, it may be possible they have living creatures upon them, of some sort ; nay, peradventure, even men and women of some sort, or even angels of some sort and degree ?

8 For who shall put a limit to the power and wisdom of the Creator of All Things ; and who can understand the extent and wonder of His designs ?

9 And may it not even be possible that several of the largest and brightest of the stars are like unto small suns, and give light unto very small worlds which we cannot see at all, by reason of their smallness and their distance?

10 But nothing of all this foolishness did Sithron dare to speak aloud to his father ; but he grieved that Mehetabel, his mother, was dead, because he thought that he could have told her of these troubles in his mind.

11 He marvelled much that Zelopholek never spake of the moon, but as the pale and

changeful sister of the sun ; so Sithron considered the moon only as a softer lamp for the night, or as a dream of the Sun.

12 Now Zelopholek, being accustomed to the silent habit of his son, had for several years supposed that the youth was ever attentive to his nightly teachings of astrology ;

13 And he often looked upon him with proud and loving eyes, as one who would be his successor in the City of Hebron, and in the suburbs and villages round about, as the greatest astrologer of his generation.

14 But one night, when the heavens were more full of large and brilliant stars, and more numerous in all the lesser stars, and the little specks that were sparkling in the hour before day-break, it came to pass that the mouth of Sithron was opened, and he told his father, Zelopholek, all that had long been like a dazzling vision in his brain, and a great trouble in his heart ;

15 But also a triumph, only for the fear he had of his father's displeasure.

16 And Zelopholek was amazed, and also troubled at what he heard from the mouth of his son.

17 Also he was disappointed, even unto bitterness.

18 Moreover, he was afraid lest the mind of Sithron had broken loose from all reason.

19 Also he was afraid that the neighbours, and people round about, should know of these strange wonderings and childish fancies, and that it might come to the ears of the priests of Hebron, who might incite the people to stone Sithron, as one who had a wicked mind, and a spirit that was born of darkness, and of lights that were evil.

20 So he ordered his son to be silent as to all those things which he had now confessed unto him.

CHAPTER III.

1 Zelopholek knoweth that he is about to die. 2 He therefore placeth Sithron with a carpenter, to learn that trade. 3 But Sithron hath no mind for such work. 4 Zelopholek becometh blind, and placeth his son with Azur Jarab, a tanner. 5 Sithron hath no mind for that work, yet striveth notwithstanding to learn it. 6 But he spoileth the skins. 7 Azur Jarab beateth him often, and cruelly. 8 Sithron sueth for pardon, but Azur Jarab continueth to beat him, and insulteth the memory of Mehetabel, his mother.

IN his old age, and his poverty and distress of mind at the dangerous childishness of the mind of his son, Zelopholek gave way in his strength, and prepared to die.

2 He therefore placed Sithron with a carpenter named Shuthelah, who was a neighbour, so that his son might learn that trade, whereby to gain a living.

3 And Sithron did as best he could, which was very ill, so that he spoiled things instead of learning to make things ;

4 For the youth had no mind for that work.

5 So Shuthelah took him back to Zelopholek with kind words and much regretfulness.

6 And he said that the youth was not altogether to be blamed, as he had been taught from a child to sit upon the house-top at night, and he would still continue this, whereby his eyes could not be properly watchful for work by day.

7 Zelopholek spake not of this to Sithron, but wept much in secret, so that he found that he was about to become blind.

8 And being anxious that his son should learn to do something whereby to gain his bread, Zelopholek placed him with Azur Jarab, a tanner, who was a wealthy and skilful man in that trade.

9 Very soon after this Zelopholek became quite blind :

10 And he lived alone, having no wife or son to help him.

11 But sometimes one or other of his neigh-

bours, remembering how great had been his repute as an astrologer and soothsayer of future events, would bring him bread and water.

12 If any one spake unto him in a compassionate voice, Zelopholek would say, that he needed it not ; he was very happy.

13 If a mess of meat were offered to him, he would put it gently aside, saying that he fed upon light.

14 And a neighbour, with an unkind tongue, said that he well believed those words, as one could almost see through him :

15 Which saying having been told to Zelopholek, the blind astrologer smiled, saying, that man was a wise man, of great discerning.

16 Now Sithron was slow at learning what he was told to do, by Azur Jarab, the tanner, for he had no mind for that work.

17 He liked the trade of carpentry better ; but he disliked both trades, being unable to keep his thoughts upon what he was doing.

18 He was continually thinking of the nightly wonders in the heavens, and how much might be there of which no prophet, even the greatest of their prophets, had ever yet spoken.

19 Neither had any other man dared to speak of such fancies.

20 So the youth sometimes spoiled skins of

some value, brought from distant lands; and Azur Jarab often beat him cruelly with a stick, or with a knotted leathern thong.

21 Now Sithron, enduring this as best he could, without cries, yet with many tears, for he knew he had been doing wrong, besought his master's forgiveness.

22 And one day Sithron said, O sir, I pray you believe that I have never done thee these injuries by a careless hand, or by a careless mind, but because my thoughts are always wandering away in the far regions of the nightly heavens, even where the eyes of Zelo-pholek, my father, ever dwelt; and also the eyes of Mehetabel, my mother, who is dead :

23 Yea, and in regions far beyond those fields of brightness which they both contemplated so constantly.

24 And speaking thus, the youth fell on his knees, weeping bitterly, and he promised to strive and satisfy Azur Jarab, his master, with better care and usefulness.

25 But Azur Jarab, hearing the youth say those things about the regions beyond the stars, continued to beat him with the leathern thong, though the youth humbled himself before him, with no further speech.

26 And Azur Jarab said, I do not think thou

can'st ever do any better, being born of a fool for a mother ;

27 For if Zelopholek was truly thy father, which some folk doubt, then Mehetabel, thy mother, could have had no more sense than the fowls of the air or the beasts of the field.

28 Now when Azur Jarab said this, Sithron ceased weeping, and rose up from his knees ;

29 And he took an earthen water vessel that was near his hand, and cast it at Azur Jarab.

30 And the earthen vessel smote the tanner upon the forehead, so that he was bruised, and he staggered back some paces.

31 And Azur Jarab, recovering himself, drove the youth before him with fury.

32 And he thrust Sithron out of the house, being an injured man, and followed him with many curses.

CHAPTER IV.

1 *A priest of Hebron, desireth to lay hands upon Sithron. 2 Sithron returneth in distress to his father. 3 He findeth Zelopholek asleep on the top of the house. 4 Certain men of substance raise a monument. 5 The neighbours warn Sithron of the intentions of the priest. 5 Sithron, as one going mad, wandereth towards the distant hills and pastures.*

Now a certain priest of the city of Hebron, having been told of some strange things

concerning the son of Zelopholek, took counsel with another priest as to what they should do.

2 But they disagreed as to whether the son of the astrologer should first be laid hands on, or whether Zelopholek, his father, should first be brought before the High Priest.

3 And while this dispute was continued, Sithron returned to his father's house.

4 He stood a long time at the door, fearing to open it, for he trembled to meet the face of his father, after this second and far worse end of his apprenticeship.

5 And something beside, though he knew not what, made him tremble when he entered, though there was no one in the room.

6 And this feeling increased as he slowly, and with trembling steps went up the stairs.

7 It was early in the evening, and no stars were yet risen ; but he found his father lying on the top of the house, in a deep sleep.

8 And Sithron bent low to look at him, and then knelt down beside him for a while.

9 And he then threw himself upon the body of Zelopholek, for he felt that the cold sleep of his father was the sleep of death.

10 And Sithron remained by the side of his father all that night.

11 And when the morning was come, some of

the neighbours, seeing the door of the house was wide open, and no one within, entered and took Sithron away, trying to comfort him.

12 So they buried Zelopholek ; and his son mourned for him, fasting and praying, and unwilling to take comfort.

13 But before the astrologer was buried, many men of substance mourned for him, and caused his body to be anointed with precious ointment ; and they prepared to erect a high mound to his memory.

14 For his son, they could do nothing, seeing he could do nothing for himself.

15 So Sithron went wandering about the city, and was well nigh starved but that some of the neighbours were charitable towards him.

16 For although they knew, from his wild talk from time to time about the stars, that he had gone mad by following his father's work too early, and that he was no better than a fool, or one that was well-nigh an idiot, yet some people were attracted by his face, by the gentle sadness of his manner, and the sweet despair of the tones of his voice.

17 But besides his thoughts as to the stars, the mind of Sithron of late became perplexed and pained over many things he had been taught to believe by the priests of Hebron.

18 Also by many things derived from the early prophets, and holy warriors, and conquerors, and priests of the children of Israel.

19 Now the cause of his inward rebellion to the great prophets and leaders of his people, and also of his seeming foolishness, and the seeming idiotcy as of one lost to the world, was this :

20 His mind was unable to reconcile the unmeasurable greatness of the works of God, out of and *beyond* the earth, with the littleness of the mind attributed to God *in* the earth, as taught by the prophets, and leaders, and priesthood of his country.

21 So his brain being strong in thought, but not strong enough to bear the weight and mixture of his thoughts, he began to be really as one going mad.

22 Look at this young fellow, said the people in the streets, and listen to the things he saith to himself at times, and even to others. He is star-stricken. Instead of staring up at the heavens by night, he should try his hand at earning his bread during the day by staring down at the earth of a garden or a field.

23 But the scoffs of the people did no good, neither could they do any harm to one so lost to the earth as Sithron, the son of stars, or, as

Bar-Kochbah signifieth in Hebrew, one lost among the lights of heaven.

24 And the star-stricken youth, without knowing or caring whither he went, strayed out of the city, and away beyond the suburbs, among vines, and fir trees, and olive groves, and stunted oaks, till he came among the lonely fields and pastoral hills, some leagues away from the city.

CHAPTER V.

1 *Sithron, having wandered among distant pastures, is dying for want of food and shelter. 2 Milkah, the daughter of a farmer, findeth him asleep. 3 She taketh him to her father's house. 4 Sithron marrieth Milkah. 5 They tend flocks of sheep together. 6 Sithron teacheth Milkah to think of the stars after his mind.*

FOR many days and nights Sithron wandered away from the suburbs of the city, and through villages, where sometimes there was given to him a piece of bread or a cup of goats' milk.

2 For some women and young girls often took pity of him when they looked in his face ;

3 But Sithron never spake of his hard lot or complained of anything ;

4 So he strayed along, not seeking any place or anything, and often slept during the dark

hours of night among groves of fir trees or of oaks, having pulled down some of the small lower branches and those that had most leaves, to cover himself from the cold winds.

5 But when the night became bright with stars, he would seek an opening among the trees, and sit at the foot of a tree, gazing upward, even as his father before him was used to do ;

6 But with many different thoughts.

7 And after a time he found himself among hills and vales of pasture, where flocks of sheep were feeding ; and one night he fell asleep among some sheep, even close beside one of them ;

8 And because of the good warmth and comfort he had by the side of the woolly body of the sheep, he slept through the whole night, and even after the sun was just rising.

9 And it came to pass that Milkah, the youngest and fairest daughter of Rekem Ophri, the owner of these flocks of sheep, found Sithron lying asleep by the side of one of the ewes.

10 And Milkah gazed upon the pale face of the youth for some time before she awakened him.

11 And when Sithron awoke he looked up at the face of Milkah, and their eyes became like unto each other's eyes.

12 And this was because they loved each other, though neither of them as yet knew that it was love.

13 And Milkah took Sithron to her father's house, and told her father how she had found him.

14 Now Rekem Ophri, seeing how forlorn he was, gave him food and lodgment, and fresh raiment.

15 And Rekem Ophri, being told by Milkah of some things the youth had said about the stars, took pleasure in hearing him, though he only smiled at what he said, as if it had been a dream.

16 After this, Sithron for some time tended the sheep of Rekem Ophri.

17 And seeing that Milkah, his youngest daughter, loved Sithron, and that Sithron loved her, Rekem Ophri gave his youngest daughter in marriage to him.

18 And many people wondered much at this, and women said, What findeth Milkah in this young fellow, excepting that he hath bright eyes, but of a mad strangeness, and beautiful teeth, but with a foolish tongue? And he hath the modest manner of a maiden more than of a man.

19 Now Rekem Ophri gave large flocks of

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sheep to be tended by Sithron and Milkah, and made them happy in his house.

20 And when evening was come, and the flocks had been carefully driven into fold, except those old ewes and rams which were left upon the hills, Sithron and Milkah sat beneath a tree, and he told her many of his thoughts about the stars, and of the living things that peradventure might be happy within them.

CHAPTER VI.

- 1 *A son is born unto Sithron and Milkah.* 2 *The mind of Sithron becomes troubled.* 3 *He doubteth of the covenant called circumcision.* 4 *Sithron conferreth with his wife.* 5 *Milkah is perplexed and distressed.*

Now a son was born unto Sithron and Milkah, and the name they determined to give him was Gilead.

2 The child was fair and strong ; but on the fourth day after his birth Sithron awoke from a strange dream.

3 He felt that the dream came from God, yet was he much troubled.

4 For a voice in the dream had told him that what Moses had called the Covenant of Circumcision had been falsely interpreted :

5 That Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua had dreamed it, but that God had never sent that dream.

6 After some hours Milkah said unto Sithron, Thy face hath been much troubled since thou didst awake ; tell me the cause, I beseech thee.

7 So he told Milkah the cause, and she became pale with fear.

8 But, by-and-bye, she listened to all that Sithron said.

9 On the fifth day after the birth of the boy, Sithron declared his repugnance to the ordination called Circumcision, and would have no mutilation performed on the babe.

10 Then was Milkah greatly alarmed, for she said, The eighth day is at hand, when the priest cometh to perform this ancient covenant and rite ; and what will be said if we tell him this shall not be done ?

11 And Sithron remained silent.

12 But on the sixth day after the birth of the babe, the mouth of Sithron was opened :

13 And he spake unto Milkah his wife, and said, How shall I believe that the Creator of all this earth, and of all that lives within it ; the Creator also of the sun ; the Creator also of the stars, and all that is within them, would have made so mean and little a Covenant as

that which Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua dreamed ?

14 Yea, the Covenant that a priest should cut a little circle of skin from a male infant newly born ?

15 Then was Milkah greatly frightened, for she said, I see with thy thoughts, and my mind is as thy mind in this matter :

16 But, O my beloved husband, what will the priests say unto us, and the high priest, and the judges of Hebron ?

17 What will happen to us if we do not obey this law of our forefathers, and prophets and leaders of the children of Israel ?

CHAPTER VII.

1 *Sithron prepareth for death.* 2 *Milkah proposeth they should fly.* 3 *They then confer as to another plan.* 4 *And it seemeth possible to evade this law.* 5 *On the eighth day after the birth of the babe, the rite of circumcision is performed :* 6 *But not according to holy law.*

Now Sithron, having resolved that the male child Gilead should not suffer the mutilation called Circumcision, expected no mercy from the priests.

2 So he fell upon his face, and prayed to God to enable him to endure whatever death might befall him.

3 He could not believe in such a Covenant :

4 For if the need of this were only a need of cleanliness, then truly a Covenant as to the use of water had well sufficed, and had been far more wise and seemly.

5 Or, if a distinguishing mark were needed for the chosen people, a small slit in the ears would have served for both sexes.

6 Then Milkah, thinking with his mind, proposed that they should save themselves and the child by flight from the fields and pastures.

7 However, on further conference, they settle upon another plan :

8 There was a friendly priest, named Ozem, who often visited the farm of Rekem Ophri ; this priest being very old, and of a dim sight.

9 He also was of a cheerful disposition, and liked to eat of baked meats, and to drink wine.

10 And Sithron said to his wife, Let the rite be performed in a darkened room ; and let a small circle of skin be cut by the priest from the elbow of the babe, or from the thumb of one hand, or from the toe of one foot.

11 And this should be done after Ozem, the priest, had feasted, and been made merry.

12 So it came to pass that on the eighth day after the birth of the male child Gilead, that the friendly priest was made drunk, and they took him into a darkened room ; and they told him of the friends who were there assembled round in the dark room, though none were there.

13 And carrying the child in his swaddling clothes, they laid bare the tip of one elbow :

14 And Milkah assisting the priest, a small circle of skin was cut from the elbow of the babe, by the holy knife of Ozem.

15 So the rite of Circumcision was performed, and no one but Sithron and Milkah his wife knew that it was done in an unusual manner.

16 Now Sithron and Milkah kept close their secret.

17 And the boy Gilead throve apace, beyond those male babes who undergo the usual mutilation.

18 And there were no thunders from Mount Sinai.

19 Neither were there plagues or an earthquake in the city and suburbs and villages round about Hebron.

20 And Sithron continued his favourite talk with Milkah on the wonders contained in the earth ; and on God's creation of the sun, and all the stars.

CHAPTER VIII.

- 1 Rekem Ophri giveth his eldest daughter Tilzah in marriage to Kedeth Shunem. 2 Rekem Ophri dieth. 3 He hath bequeathed his farm and flocks to Tilzah and her husband. 4 They behave kindly to Sithron and Milkah. 5 Kedeth Shunem sometimes listeneth to Sithron's words.*

Now Rekem Ophri, the father of Milkah, gave his eldest daughter Tilzah in marriage to Kedeth Shunem, the owner of many herds.

2 Not long after this, Rekem Ophri died, bequeathing all his flocks to his elder daughter Tilzah and her husband.

3 But to Milkah and her husband he left nothing, having some fears concerning Sithron.

4 Now these newly-married ones behave kindly to Milkah and to Sithron, and retain them as farm servants and shepherds.

5 Larger flocks of sheep were assigned to their care ; for said Kedeth Shunem to himself, This young fellow, Sithron, I do not find to be the fool people said.

6 And Kedeth Shunem even listened to Sithron sometimes of an evening, urging him to talk of what he thought about living things being in the stars.

7 Yet, said he, These things cannot be as thou dreamest ; for Moses and Joshua, and many prophets and great men since, have said nothing of that kind.

8 But Sithron answered and said, It may well be that those great ones said nothing about the stars, for their thoughts were filled with conquering and slaughtering the believers in Baal and Dagon, and possessing their lands, to give for an inheritance to the children of Israel.

9 But all this, said Kedeth Shunem, was done by the direct commands of God ; and we know this to have been so because Moses and Joshua have said so :

10 Or, they dreamed so, answered Sithron : and peradventure God sent that dream to them ; but how shall we know this ?

11 Because, answered Kedeth Shumen, it hath been thus handed down to us ; and I do not wish to speak any more of this, or to hear any more.

12 So Kedeth Shunem went away, saying to himself, I have altered my mind about this young fellow ; and I do not think him mad or silly, but perhaps somewhat dangerous to listen to.

13 Nevertheless, Kedeth Shunem increased the substance of Sithron, and made him steward of his herds and camels.

CHAPTER IX.

1 *Tilzah beareth a male child. 2 Festivities are held, and Kedeth Shunem and Sithron become merry. 3 Sithron forgetteth prudence, and danceth, and talketh in private against circumcision. 4 Kedeth Shunem becometh alarmed, and forceth Sithron to divulge his secret. 5 Kedeth Shunem demandeth that Sithron shall justify himself.*

Now Tilzah bore a child, which was a male child, and Kedeth Shunem rejoiced exceedingly.

2 And there were festivities on the farm among all those who tended the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, or were busied in the house.

3 And Sithron ate, and also drank wine, and was merry with Kedeth Shunem; and presently, losing all prudence, he spake in his ear when they were alone.

4 And he said, the rite of Circumcision is a foolish and barbarous rite; do not let the babe be mutilated.

5 Now Kedeth Shunem, being a little drunk, laughed at this, thinking it not truly meant, or that he had not heard aright;

6 But next morning he remembered it with a disturbed mind, and, taking Sithron into one

of his camel-yards, made him confess his opinion against the rite of Circumcision.

7 Afterwards he made him confess that he had evaded it as to his own child, Gilead.

8 Then Kedeth Shunem set apart an hour of the next night in which Sithron should walk alone with him in the garden among the tamarind trees, that he might hear what justification could be shown :

9 For said he, Is it not distinctly written in the first book of Moses that God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my Covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations ?

10 This is my Covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee : every man and male child among you shall be circumcised :

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin ; and it shall be a token of the Covenant betwixt me and you ?

12 Then Kedeth Shunem stepped back a pace or two from Sithron, and waited to hear what he would say.

13 And Sithron answered and said, Bear with me, I pray thee, a little while, and let me not sink in thy reproof unheard ; for I am grateful to thee for many things,

14 Suffer me that I make reply in a parable concerning three men :

15 The first man was in a ship far away on the sea, and he was very ill of a fever, and was about to die.

16 So he said to the captain of the ship, Can we yet see land ?

17 Then answered the captain, and said, No sign of land can be seen.

18 And the next day the dying man again called the captain to him, and said, Can we yet see land ?

19 But the captain said, No, there is no sign of it.

20 Then spake the dying man in great grief, and said, I cannot die till I see the land ?

21 For on the land was I born, and all my relations and friends are buried in graves, and I cannot die facing the immensity that surrounds us.

22 So this man continued dying in the same state many days, till at last the captain said, There is land yonder !

23 Then the dying man besought them to carry him upon the deck, and directly he beheld the land, he blessed God, and died.

24 Now this was a man whose mind had a terror of immensity, and could not face it.

25 Let me now speak of the second man, for he could bear to look upon immensity and commune with Almighty Power.

26 Although he felt himself as a mere man amidst the great elements of Power, yet he thought himself worthy of much consideration.

27 And he believed that the great Spiritual Elements of Power could come down to the earth, and speak to him in a human voice.

28 Yea, familiarly from a mount, or from a whirlwind, or from a bush on fire.

29 And that this Voice of these great elements of power, yea, this Spirit of Immensity, might and would dictate to him on matters of the smallest and meanest kind.

30 That was the second man.

31 Now the third man was so fully impressed with a sense of Infinity, and of the Infinite Power doing work therein, that he could not conceive that the greatest of all things could specially, and in Person, concern Itself about the smallest.

32 The lips of Sithron were closed, so Kedeth Shunem said to him, Tell me who are these three men, and what does all this purport?

33 But Sithron said, Let me be forgiven if I anger thee by my interpretation of this parable.

34 The first man representeth all those people, poor heathens and idolaters, all those who can-

not feel and worship Immensity, but must contract their sight to earthly images, and pour out to them their prayers.

35 The second man represents great conquerors, and prophets and lawgivers, like Moses and Joshua, who believe that God came down upon the earth to talk to them ;

36 Giving them special directions for great slaughters of men, women and children ;

37 And concerning also small matters of cutting circular morsels of the skin of male infants, and of burning animals upon altars, with spices, to make smoke and incense for divine nostrils.

38 The third man represents one to whom all those shocking things, and all those little things, cannot possibly be mingled with and allied to the Spirit of the Creator of the sun, and the moon, and the earth, and the stars that cannot be counted, and all that possibly liveth and moveth within them.

39 And that man is he who now trembleth at his own thoughts and his own words, but justifieth himself before thee : O, Kedeth Shunem, my brother !

40 Then Kedeth Shunem rent his garments, and put dust upon his head, and hurried away out of the garden.

CHAPTER X.

1 Kedeth Shunem repeateth to his wife part of the parable of Sithron with reference to circumcision. 2 The dismay of Tilzah. 3 She speaketh of Sithron and Milkah with contempt and fear. 4 Kedeth Shunem driveth them away from his lands. 5 They go to tend a small flock of sheep in Cadesh-Burnea.

Now after Kedeth Shunem had taken counsel with himself, he told Tilzah of what Sithron had said concerning the rite of circumcision :

2 Also of what had been done to evade the rite ordained by God's Covenant, whereby his male child Gilead had been circumcised in the wrong place ;

3 Yea, by the cutting a small circle of skin from the elbow of the babe.

4 Then was Tilzah greatly dismayed ; and when Kedeth Shunem also said that Sithron had counselled that a like evasion should be practised with their new-born child, then was Tilzah filled with contempt and anger.

5 And she said, Of a truth my sister Milkah was always a fool, and believed that she did a wise thing in marrying a greater fool than herself.

6 But see you not, O, my husband, that if Sithron hath been so loose of counsel as to tell this iniquity to you, he may also tell it to others ;

7 Then shall our house be disgraced by such kindred, and it may be that the priests of the City of Hebron, and the country around, shall denounce us as amongst the unholy.

8 And Kedeth Shunem answered and said, This fellow shall no longer be my steward, neither shall he and his wife have any charge over my sheep ;

9 Neither shall they remain in my fields, or have any habitation in the country round about Hebron ;

10 For, if they do not seek some other place, I will denounce them to the priesthood of the city, who will deal with them according to the measure of their iniquity.

11 So the swineherds of the farm of Kedeth Shunem came with fire-brands and staves, and threatened to burn down the house of Sithron ; and they drove him and Milkah away from the fields of their master :

12 Also they drove them far beyond, following them for two days and nights ;

13 And the swineherds often cursed them with loud voices, crying out, Our master saith ye have someway blasphemed the Covenant of God !

14 Yea, and ye have reviled the law of Moses, and the great deeds of the holy slaughters of Joshua, the Conqueror before God!

15 Go and seek comfort from the stars, and beg of the stars to send you down bread!

16 After two days and nights the swineherds ceased from following them; and Sithron with Milkah and their child made their way to Cadesh-Burnea, near the wilderness, more than twenty miles south of Hebron.

17 And at this place they found an owner of several flocks of sheep, and were hired to tend one of the smallest of the flocks.

CHAPTER XI.

1 The child of Kedeth Shunem is duly circumcised. 2 He counselleth his wife to secrecy as to the iniquity of Sithron and Milkah. 3 Tilzah promiseth secrecy. 4 The priest, to whom she privily confideth the secret, communicateth the same to the Church of Hebron. The High priest calleth a council. 6 The end of a wicked priest.

ON the eighth day after the birth of a male child unto Kedeth Shunem, the babe had the little circle of skin cut off by the priest after the holy manner of the rite which the Book of Moses declareth to be the great Covenant made and ordained by Jehovah.

2 Then counselled he his wife Tilzah that she should hold her peace as to the iniquity of the evasion of the usual cutting of a little circle of skin, by causing it to be cut from another part of the child of Sithron ;

3 For, said he, Who knoweth but we may be upbraided and come to shame by our relationship to this mad fellow and his wife.

4 And Tilzah answered and said, It is a wise counsel that we should not risk being shamed by our relationship with these two wicked fools ; and I will tell the tale to nobody.

5 So, a few days after, when Tilzah was in conversation with the priest who had duly performed the holy rite upon her babe, it came to pass that she told him the whole story ;

6 But, said she, it must be a secret between thee and me, and nobody else must hear it, according to the promise I made unto my husband.

7 And the priest was greatly shocked at what he had heard, but agreed with Tilzah that it was better for them all that the iniquity should never be told.

8 But it came to pass, not long after, that the Church of Hebron was acquainted with the whole matter, no one knew how, and the High Priest of the City of Hebron called a council.

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9 And the wicked priest Ozem, who had unconsciously committed the profane and devilish act of cutting the little circlet of skin from a babe's elbow instead of cutting it from the organ of generation, according to the holy rite ordained by Jehovah, was denounced as a drunken conniver at the blasphemy.

10 And directly this became known to the people of Hebron the wrath of all the holiest men in the city was kindled, and they would have stoned Ozem to death, but he hid himself in a fig-garden for some days :

11 Then being hunted out, he went into a fir-grove, and hanged himself.

CHAPTER XII.

1 *Sithron and Milkah being traced, a secret messenger is sent from the High Priest of Hebron. 2 Sithron purposeth to give himself up, but Milkah causeth the messenger to be afraid, and to hasten back. 3 Wrath of the High Priest. 4 An armed force is sent from Hebron. 5 Sithron and Milkah fly to the land of the Philistines, near Gath. 6 They are protected by the King of Gath, and the armed force from Hebron is put to the sword. 7 Sithron and Milkah hire themselves as servants in Gath, and Sithron is once more listened to about the stars.*

THE iniquitous pair, Sithron and his wife, were traced ere long, and the High Priest of

Hebron sent a messenger with his commands that they should instantly return to Hebron.

2 The messenger came privily, as the blasphemers were now in the land of the Philistines.

3 And Sithron, seeing how they were pursued, said to Milkah, embracing her, Thou seest how they follow us for what I have caused thee to have done to our child ;

4 Therefore carry him away to-night, and seek refuge in the City of Gath, and I will return with this messenger to Hebron, which will cause the priesthood to abandon further persecution of thee, and of Gilead our child.

5 But Milkah answered, and said, Not so, my husband, for they will wreak the more vengeance upon thee, and stone thee as they would have stoned the innocent priest whom we deceived.

6 Therefore listen to my counsel : Let us tell this secret messenger that the uncircumcised Philistines round about are our friends, and that, if he doth not immediately depart, they will hang him upon the nearest tree, when they are told of his errand.

7 So this was done ; and the secret messenger from the High Priest of Hebron, being in great fear, immediately left them.

8 And Sithron and Milkah continued to tend their flock of sheep in peace, and in happiness.

9 But when the messenger returned with his news to Hebron, and told of the threat that had been made, the High Priest was wroth, and he called a council of priests and judges.

10 And they told all these abominations to the chief ruler of Hebron, and how their messenger had been insulted and threatened by the blasphemers Sithron and Milkah, who were dwelling among uncircumcised heathens in the pastures near Gath, yea, among the Philistines, who befriended them.

11 So the chief ruler in Hebron called forth a captain of great valour, and sent him with three hundred soldiers to bring back these blasphemers, and to slay all the Philistine shepherds and their servants who opposed them.

12 And it came to pass that the day before that captain and his three hundred armed men arrived among the pastures near Gath, the news of their approach became known to Sithron and Milkah, and Milkah hastened to the City of Gath, and told all the story to soldiers whom she met in the great street.

13 And the soldiers immediately told the King.

14 Then said Achish, King of Gath, to one of his chief princes, How long will it be that these circumcised dogs of Israel believe they can send soldiers into the lands of those who worship

other Gods, to get lands and spoil, or to seek to alter laws and customs ?

15 Take now three hundred soldiers ; men who are entire men , and leave only enough of these circumcised land-robbers alive to return to tell of the scorn of the King of Gath.

16 So that prince of the Philistines sent three hundred entire men, and they met the captain from Hebron with his Israelite soldiers, who were fatigued with their journey.

17 And the captain from Hebron, with all his soldiers but five who could run fast, were slain with the edge of the sword.

18 After this, Sithron and Milkah hired themselves as servants to one Sorzah, who sold corn and goat's milk in Gath, and were kindly treated.

19 And Sorzah, the corn and milk dealer, finding that Sithron was often on the house-top at night, with Milkah by his side, watching the stars, asked some questions of him.

20 After this, Sorzah, who was of good understanding, often asked strange things of him, for although he saw that Sithron must be one who was afflicted with a sort of madness, yet was the owner of the stores pleased with his gentleness and the bright flow of his speech when talking of what might peradventure be living within some of the largest stars.

CHAPTER XIII.

1 The wife of Sorzah giveth birth to a child, and Sorzah inviteth two friends to eat and drink. They make merry about circumcision. 3 They ask questions of Sithron concerning the invasions, and conquests, and slaughters of the warlike Jews. 4 Also about David's purchase of Saul's daughter. 5 David's truthfulness towards the Philistines at this time is doubted.

IT came to pass that the wife of Sorzah gave birth to a male child, and he invited two friends who dwelt in Gath to eat and drink wine with him, for this was his first son, all his previous children having been daughters.

2 So he invited his two dearest friends, and these were Kiath-azek, who was a grower of cotton trees and date trees, and who dealt in pomegranates and ranunculus roots ;

3 And the other friend was Zaglon, who was a forger in iron and brass, and one who sold helmets and shields.

4 And Zaglon made merry over the late defeat of the three hundred Jewish soldiers who came to carry off Sithron because his child, Gilead, was a complete child, except a little circle of skin that had been cut from one elbow.

5 Then did those three Philistine friends

laugh much about the Jewish rite of circumcision, and all the more because they had heard that Moses declared it to be a grand Covenant made with Abraham by Jehovah in Person.

6 We have heard, said Kiath-azek, that some of their elders, who are bold enough to reason, explain and justify this cruel and stupid ceremony called 'circumcision' by saying that their forefathers were an unwashed and filthy race; but surely their foreseeing God had better have made a commandment that his "chosen" people should never be filthy; for, if a man have a dirty head, yea, even as from one of the Plagues of Egypt, ye would say he had better wash out the vermin than cut off his head. Wherefore do ye laugh?

7 And they called Sithron to come in, and drink wine with them.

8 Then spake Sorzah, who had said little up to this time, but, being accustomed to drink water only, or milk, he was now somewhat drunk with wine;

9 And he said unto Sithron, Why should not your Moses, and Joshua, and Saul, and David have said they coveted the fertile lands and cities of other people, and would obtain them for themselves by fire and sword and slaughter?

10 That would have been like unto the honest

words of other robbers, and like all other invaders and conquerors ?

11 But they said their God commanded them to seize upon the goodly possessions of other people, whom they were to slaughter, even to all the women and children, and hang their kings upon trees, and have those goodly lands for an inheritance ;

12 And Moses and Joshua, and other great circumcised invaders and conquerors, were to divide all those lands among their own people for an inheritance, because their God had ordered it, as they said ?

13 Then spake Kiath-azek, who was also unused to drink wine, Tell me now, Sithron, if thou knowest, whether it be true that King Saul sold his daughter, Michal, to David for an hundred foreskins of our people ?

14 We know that one hundred, nay, two hundred of our people who fell in battle, were thus mutilated, but did your king, Saul, really make so vile a bargain as your prophet, Samuel, declareth ?

15 Then did Sithron hold down his head, for he was ashamed, and he would make no answer.

16 So Zaglon, the armourer, now laughed aloud, and he said, Behold this star-stricken young Israelite, how shamed he is for his people!

17 He knoweth this thing to be true, or he believeth it to be so ; but, when all these fore-skins were brought to Saul, what think you the king did with them ?

18 But, as none made any guess, Zaglon laughed a loud laugh, and said, Doubtless the king would have the trophy preserved ; and the rings of skin were dried in the sun, and threaded upon a thread of silk and of gold for a bridal necklace.

19 Then laughed all these Philistines ; but Sithron held down his head with shame and grief, and hastened away from them.

20 The three friends then spake of David, who was now in Gath, as an enemy to Judah.

21 And they greatly doubted of David's honesty towards Achish, their king.

22 For, said they, how can one who has warred greivously against us, be now a friend to us, and ready to war on our side ?

23 And how can one, whose great conquerors and lawgivers before him are believed by him and his people to have seen and heard their God in Person, down here upon the earth, hold any real friendship with us whose Gods of glory are Baal and Dagon, and whose shining images only are in our temples ?

24 Now Sithron, when he had left those merry

feasters, said unto himself, Wherefore should I be troubled at the grievous truths those three drunken Philistines may say of my people ; for have I not often heard three drunken Jews say many bad things of the Philistines, though of another sort ?

25 And being minded to hear what else they might say, he again drew near.

26 So Zaglon called with a loud and merry voice, saying, Come hither again, young Israelite, for we well know that your great ones of old times loved wine ; even Lot was willing to be made drunk by his two daughters ; and he afterwards lay with them, and begat children, which act met with no reproof at all from your God nor from your priests.

27 Then these three men of Gath shouted and beat upon the table, and continued to laugh and to feast and be very merry.

28 And Zaglon again spake to Sithron, saying, Thou seest we are feasting on a fat suckling from our herds on the hills, and we fear not that our God will have a fury against us, like unto thy God at times, for what we choose to eat ?

29 Now answer us truly, dost thou remember when thy Jehovah declared that he was furious against your people of Israel because of some disobedience as to their worship, and commanded

your holy man Hezekiah Ezekiel to do penance for others by eating bread mixed with human dung ?

30 But because your holy man turned aside from such a meal, worse than any meal of beasts, your Jehovah relented a little, and commanded him that he should mix cow-dung with his bread as a mercy, instead of the first mixing.

31 And while Sithron waxed pale and trembled, for he well knew how all this was believed, these three men of Gath shouted, and coughed, and made gestures, and Kiath Azek said, Of a verity, the God of the Jews must have strange whims and fancies, and must indeed be a very low sort of God, to order such mean and filthy punishments ; unjust, moreover, for the offending people, and not their holy man, should have been made to eat that stuff, or to have been punished after some more human way.

32 Then spake Sorzah, rising up, and he said to the young Israelite, Behold what a glory of softened fire and of golden mist streameth in at yonder open door ! Go thou to that open door, and look up at our Greatest God, even BAAL, that blazeth in silence up on high ! Dost thou think, young Israelite, that such a God would even command any of us to eat dung because we had made him angry ?

33 Then these three men of Gath stood up, and pointed to the mist of golden beams streaming in at the open door.

34 And Sithron turned aside, and fled through the door into the sunlight.

CHAPTER XIV.

1 Of King Achish, and David, who is now in Gath with two of his wives. 2 David is sent away by the Philistine princes. 3 David hasteneth to Ziklag, but finding it hath been ravaged, he leaves that city. 4 Sithron and Milkah journey to Ziklag. 5 David collecteth an army, and besiegeth Ziklag. 6 Priests of Hebron send a messenger to David, which causeth Sithron and Milkah to fly to Jabbock. 7 News of the defeat of Saul, and David's song of lamentation.

Now while David was still afraid that Saul, King of Israel, would seek to take his life, for the great envy and jealousy the king bare unto him, David bethought him of a stratagem to escape from Saul.

2 The cause of this envy and hate was because some women of Israel had said, while dancing and singing, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands ;

3 And no honour seemed so great among the warlike Children of Israel as that of slaying many thousands.

4 So from that day Saul endeavoured to kill David, or to cause his death by other means; wherefore, David resolved to seek protection among the Philistines, whom he had once warred against very grievously in aid of Saul.

5 And Achish, King of Gath, believed David when he pretended that he was now ready to war against Judah; and Achish received him kindly, together with David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelite, who had been Nabal's wife.

6 But David's other wife, Michal, had been taken away from him by her father, Saul, though David had purchased her at a very strange and unseemly price.

7 Therefore, in Gath did David tarry, declaring unto the king that the Israelites abhorred him.

8 Now David had heard in Hebron of the iniquity of Sithron, and of the wrath of the priests; and as he journeyed to Gath he heard also of the discomfiture of the three hundred Jewish soldiers, who had been sent to seize Sithron ;

9 But David did not know that Sithron was now in the city, or he might have found means to get him privily seized, and sent back to Hebron.

10 The fear of this danger, however, lay heavy

in the mind of Milkah, and she counselled her husband that they should depart.

11 Also did Sithron wish to depart, because he had been put to shame for the folly and obscenity of some things done by his people, as to a marriage-dower of foreskins, and for other things said against them.

12 But David meanwhile had not persuaded all men in Gath of his good faith towards the Philistines.

13 And one day several princes of the Philistines, together with Eglon-ekri, a priest of the temple of Baal, held conference.

14 The princes were owners of much land and many herds of cattle, and the priest also had pastures and many flocks of sheep and goats.

15 And the princes said, Why cometh here this circumcised fighter of many battles against us, and against others? and why playeth he not upon the harp among his own mutilated people?

16 His people talk scornfully of our Gods and their Images; why then should we entertain a man whose God is not one of ours, but a God who urgeth the Israelites to kill and make spoil of other nations for an inheritance, saying they worship false gods?

17 Then spake another of the princes, and said,

Our king regardeth this David, and often hath him to feast with him, because he singeth well and playeth upon the harp, and danceth high dances :

18 But let us seize him privately and put him to death, lest at some future day he bringeth an army before our gates !

19 For will not these circumcised robbers do any act of treachery ? Bethink ye of the bargain they made to be united in friendship with a people, whose lands they coveted, provided those people would consent to have little circles of skin cut from the organs of generation after the cruel manner of Israel :

20 And when those foolish men consented, and while they were sick and sore a few days after, so that they could not fight, did not the Israelites fall upon them with the edge of the sword, and take possession of all their lands, and wives and daughters, and all else that they had ?

21 Therefore we say let this David, who has always been our enemy, and is now a false friend, be seized and put to death.

22 Then spake the priest Eglon-ekri, and said, Do not thus, for other means can be found to get rid of him.

23 We Philistines have made our invasions and battles, like other nations ; sometimes to

gain and to enjoy the lands of others, yet far more often to defend our own.

24 For we Philistines are a pastoral people, and would rather continue at peace, if that may be.

25 It is not thus with the warlike Jews ; for they desire to gain possession of all the best lands ; which they do not call robbery, but a religious duty.

26 We call upon Baal, our heavenly Sun, and upon Ashtaroth, and upon Dagon, to give us victory when we are about to go into battles ; but these circumcised people say their God orders all these battles and robberies of cities and pasture lands, and that their Jehovah fights on their side with thunders and hail-stones, and with darkness or with fire :

27 And the inheritance of other nations shall thus be taken from them and divided among tribes of the Israelites.

28 Then spake another of the Philistine princes and said, All these things we have long known ; therefore the greater reason for our putting this David to death.

29 But again, said Eglon-ekri, Do not thus, because it is not necessary, and because there must be some good in this bad man's nature :

30 For continually did Saul, his father-in-law, seek to kill him ; and when David twice had

the means at hand for putting Saul to death, and making himself king, he spared Saul.

31 Therefore, spare David ; but let us go to the King of Gath, and show him good reason for sending David away.

32 To this the princes of the Philistines agreed, saying, if this does not succeed, we will then of a certainty take his life, for we are sure he is treacherous towards us.

33 Now David having been told something about this conference, sent away his two wives privately to Ziklag, which also belonged to the King of Gath.

34 And it came to pass soon afterwards that Achish had a friendly conversation with David, telling him it were well they should part, and recommending him to go to Ziklag, and become its ruler.

35 So David, after a few days, betook him to Ziklag.

36 But, when he arrived there, he found that the Amalekites had seized the place, and burnt much of it, and had carried away David's wives, Ahinoam and Abigail.

37 And David was greatly grieved at the loss of those two of his wives.

CHAPTER XV.

- 1 The priests of Hebron send a secret messenger to Gath. 2 Sithron and Milkah are protected by Eglon-ekri, but they wish to leave Gath. 3 They go to thank Eglon-ekri, who encourageth Sithron to speak of many things. 4 After that, Sithron and Milkah journey to the banks of the Jabbok.*

Now before David left Gath, the fears of Milkah were found to have been with good reason ;

2 For the priests of Hebron had sent a secret message to David, informing him that Sithron and Milkah were somewhere in Gath, and urging him to get these blasphemers of Jehovah's solemn Covenant of Circumcision privily seized and sent to Hebron.

3 Now the secret messenger, when he found that David was sent out of Gath, saw that he would lose the price of his hire,

4 So he went to Sorzah, the master of Sithron and Milkah, and said, Lo, I come from the priests of Hebron, with a secret message for David, who has just been sent away:

5 Who will give me money for the secret message which I was to deliver to David from the priests of Israel ?

6 So Sorzah went to ask his wife, and Sorzah's

wife answered and said, Send the messenger to one of the head priests of Baal.

7 And Sorzah sent the messenger to Eglon-ekri.

8 Whereupon Eglon-ekri gave the messenger the price of his hire, and desired that the messenger should forthwith return to Hebron, and inform the priests who sent him, that the Gods of the Philistines had never made any foolish covenant with them as to cutting off a little circle of skin from any male child ;

9 And that the priests of Gath would protect any one who refused to obey that cruel and ridiculous custom.

10 So the messenger took the money, and went his way to some other place than Hebron, as he had no mind to deliver that message.

11 Then Eglon-ekri sent for Sithron and Milkah, and told them of this message from the priests of Hebron, and offered them his protection if they chose to remain in the city of Gath, or money to aid them on their journey elsewhere.

12 And Sithron would have preferred to remain in Gath, but Milkah was troubled by the danger they had escaped.

13 For, said Milkah, The priests of Hebron have eyes and ears everywhere, and the King

of Gath will be friendly towards David in other places ; and I beseech thee, my husband, let us leave this city directly.

14 Wherefore, having settled this, during the day, they returned at night to thank Eglon-ekri.

15 And the stars were shining brightly when they found Eglon-ekri, who put money, and some dates, and fig-cakes, and clusters of raisins into Milkah's sleeve when she told him they wished to leave Gath, and had come to thank him for his kindness towards them.

16 But when Sithron strove to speak, he was choked, and could not utter a word.

17 So Milkah thanked Eglon-ekri, and said they would ever pray for him, if he would let them do so, knowing that their God was not of the Gods he worshipped.

18 And Eglon-ekri said he was pleased with all her words ; and bade them farewell with tender looks.

19 Then suddenly, as they were about to go away, Sithron turned back, still full of trouble, and his mouth was opened :

20 And he said, O priest of Baal ! O worshipper of the Sun through his golden image in the solemn temples of thine Idols of Gods that are far away in the skies, I also honour as thou dost the Giver of light and of life to all things !

21 But must there not be a God of Gods ? not only the God thou chiefly worshippest ; not only the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Moses ; who are but four men ; but the God of all the peoples of the earth, whether they know that God, or do not know such a Spirit ?

22 Must there not be, O priest of Baal ! must there not be a God beyond the Sun ? one Supreme, who called the Sun itself into being, and who also called the Moon and the living Stars into being ?

23 All those Stars that we now look up to ? yea, and many more stars that we can scarcely see ; and that tremble away out of sight ?

24 And may it not be possible, O priest of the Temple of the Sun ! may it not be possible that some of the largest of those stars we now look up to, may themselves be as smaller suns, and give light, and life, and moving creatures to some worlds of a kind we cannot comprehend ?

25 So now, thou kindly priest of Baal ! there was, not long since, a poor fool in Hebron who used to say in his madness such things as those !

26 And he was also used to say that the Creator of all those immense things would never come down upon the earth to talk with men, and still less would such a Creator make a

Covenant with men about the smallest matters, or even about their battles and slaughters.

27 And this fool and mad one in the eyes of all men, worshipped the Creator of all we see on this earth, and all we now see shining above us, denying that the littlenesses of men were as images, and reflexions, and commands of the Creator's mind.

28 For these thoughts was he driven as a blasphemer, with scoffs and menaces, from his native land ; for this was he hunted as a beast, yea, as a wicked beast, from place to place, together with the wife of his bosom, and his little child at his wife's bosom :

29 O priest of Baal ! that poor fool and mad one am I, who now thanketh thee with his broken words, even the words of an over-filled heart.

30 So Milkah led her husband away, as one that is blind ; and Eglon-ekri wept.

31 And Sithron and Milkah rose early next morning and journeyed towards the banks of the river Jabbok ;

32 And here they found shelter in a goatherd's hut some miles to the south-west of Ramoth-Gilead.

33 Now this was in the land of the Ammonites, not far from the city of Rabbah.

CHAPTER XVI.

- 1 David gathereth soldiers, and taketh counsel of Jehovah. 2 He pursueth the Amalekites and putteth them to the sword. 3 He taketh great spoil, and recovereth his two wives. 4 Hanran, a goatherd of Jabbok, giveth the charge of a herd of goats to Sithron and Milkah. 5 The two young daughters of the goatherd love Sithron and Milkah, and desire to become the wives of Sithron. 6 The goatherd giveth his consent; but Sithron and Milkah, still fearing pursuit, go to dwell in Rabbah.*

So greatly was David distressed at the loss of his wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, that he asked counsel of Jehovah, and collected soldiers, promising them great spoil if they would go with him to Ziklag.

2 A goodly army of men was thus collected, and David, being encouraged by God, went with them to Ziklag.

3 When the Amalekites spoiled Ziklag they slew not any, either great or small, but had contented themselves by carrying away captives.

4 But David, and many who were with him, had other thoughts, for they lamented bitterly the loss of wives, and sons, and daughters.

5 And so wild in their grief and fury were many of them, that they proposed to stone

David; but David besought them to wait till he had again taken counsel from God.

6 So David called for the ephod, as a medium of grace, and inquired of the Lord what he should do? and the Lord answered, Pursue, and thou shalt recover all.

7 And it came to pass, soon after this, they found an Egyptian who lay sick in a field; and by this man, after he had received comfort at their hands, David and four hundred of his soldiers were led to where the Amalekites had rested with their spoil.

8 And behold they were spread abroad upon the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of the great spoil they had taken.

9 And David smote them with the edge of the sword, from the twilight unto the evening of the next day; recovering all that the Amalekites had carried away, besides his two wives.

10 Now Hanran, the goatherd of the hills round the valley of the Jabbok, had given one of his herds of goats to the charge of Sithron and Milkah.

11 And this goatherd one day said to Milkah, Thy husband is a good man; and although he hath rather a mad face at times when he returneth from loitering at night on the hills, yet

there is no harm in him ; and he is very comely to look upon, as many young women say.

12 My two daughters are both very young, and the elder of them hath much love for thy husband, and would fain become one of his wives.

13 To this I do not at present consent ; but by-and-bye, if he do love my daughter, and thou also wouldst like her to be his second wife, peradventure, I may give her to him.

14 Milkah answered and said, Let that be as my husband pleaseth : I shall love her if he doth.

15 Now this goatherd, Hanran, was of good possessions ; but although he was the owner of several large herds of cattle as well as goats, he was accounted a fool by all those who knew him, because of the strange things he often did :

16 So when those who lived on the hills and in the valleys near to him heard that he had offered his eldest daughter to be the second wife of a poor fellow like Sithron, they said it was to be expected that a fool should have pleasure in a madman for a son-in-law.

17 And Hanran's two daughters were both very young, and were the fairest of all who dwelt on those hills.

18 And one day Hanran overheard his two

fair girls talking to each other in secret ; and the elder one said, I love Sithron for his eyes, and for his teeth, and for his long silken hair :

19 Then spake the younger girl, and said, And I love Sithron for his voice, that sinketh into my bosom.

20 So when Hanran heard this, he called Sithron to him, and said, My daughters both love thee, and I will give thee one of them to wife, but not both.

21 Go now to thy wife Milkah, and settle between ye which one it shall be ; and which ever one is chosen, I will give with her a flock of goats and some cattle.

22 Then Sithron went to Milkah and told her all this, and they sent for the two girls, and embraced them tenderly.

23 And Sithron told them he was one that was secretly followed with hatred by priests of his nation, and his life was always in peril, as well as the lives of those who were united unto him.

24 And he said many loving words to the two discomfited girls ; after which he told them that he must depart.

25 So Sithron and Milkah embraced and kissed the two young girls, and took leave of Hanran with grateful sorrow.

26 And thinking they would be more safe from discovery in a city than in the open country, they made their way to Rabbah, which was the capital of the Ammonites.

CHAPTER XVII.

1 *Defeat of Saul in his last battle.* 2 *Death of Saul.* 3 *Rejoicings of the Philistines.* 4 *The tidings being borne to David, he singeth a song of lamentation.* 5 *David is anointed King over the house of Judah, and goeth to reside in Hebron.*

NOW it came to pass that Saul, King of Israel, in his battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa was defeated grievously :

2 All his men who fled not, were slain, and Saul was closely pursued ; his sons were slain, and Saul himself was deeply pierced by an arrow.

3 Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword; and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through and abuse me.

4 But his armour-bearer would not, for he loved Saul.

5 Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon

it: and when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his own sword, and died with him.

6 On the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer fallen on Mount Gilboa.

7 And they cut off Saul's head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the temples of their Idols, and among their people.

8 And they put his armour in the temple of Ashtaroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

9 When the people of Jabesh-gilead heard of these things, their valiant men went in the night and took down the body of Saul, and brought it to Jabesh, where they buried the bones of Saul at the foot of a tree, and fasted seven days.

10 Now it came to pass on the third day that a man came from the camp of Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head, and he told David that the soldiers of Israel had fled from the battle on Mount Gilboa, and that Saul was dead, and his sons also were dead.

11 Then David rent his clothes, as did all those who were with him; and they wept, and mourned,

and fasted. For David had ever honoured Saul, and ever loved his son Jonathan.

12 Then David took his harp, and lamented with this song over Saul, and over Jonathan his son :

13 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places : how are the mighty fallen !

14 Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph !

15 Behold it is a greater grief, O Saul ! and is it not a deeper shame, O my brother Jonathan ! that the daughters of those whose parts are all as nature ordered them, should sing and beat timbrels of joy at the fall of those who were circumcised before the Lord !

16 Ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

17 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle ! Thus sang David with his holy harp.

18 After this David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah ?

19 And the Lord said unto him, Go up.

20 And David said, Whither shall I go up ?

21 And God said, Unto Hebron.

22 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, Nabal's wife, the Carmelite, as Jehovah had directed.

23 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David over the house of Judah ; and David became King in Hebron.

CHAPTER XVIII.

- 1 *Sithron hireth himself in Rabbah to a dealer in dried fruits.*
 2 *Milkah hireth herself to a gardener's wife in gardens round a Temple.* 3 *Also she doeth some work in pottery.* 4 *The child Gilead playeth at times in the Temple among the Idols.*

Now besides many choice ripe fruits, there was a great dealing in the City of Rabbah with fruits that had been dried, especially raisins from grapes brought out of Chorazin and Bethsaida, in Lower Galilee.

2 And when Sithron offered himself to aid in carrying fruits about for sale, the dealer, whose name was Kalkor, asked if he liked dried fruits ?

3 And Sithron answered, Not much, as he greatly preferred fruits that were fresh.

4 So Kalkor engaged him to carry about dried fruits, but he was never to unpack those which came from Chorazin or Bethsaida.

5 Bearing in mind the kindness of Eglonekri, the thought came to Milkah that peradventure one of the priests of the temple in Rabbah might know something of him.

6 And this was so ; and the priest to whom she went spake for her to the high priest, and she became a servant to the wife of the chief gardener of the gardens around the great Temple of Baal.

7 And it often chanced that when the gardener's wife took women with her to cleanse the Idols, and the altar, and the floors and windows from the dust of the hot seasons, that she took Milkah among the rest.

8 And the child Gilead, being now nearly four years old, was allowed to run by her side, carrying a flower to offer to one or other of the Idols.

9 And when Milkah told the child he should not, in case it might be thought not good that the child of an Israelite should do this, the gardener's wife only smiled, and said, Let be.

10 This was only in the early time of the day, and when there were no rites or ceremonies going on ; so the child Gilead would sometimes

remain till all were gone, and he then walked about the temple alone, looking up at the Idols :

11 And he would also look at their huge gilded feet ; and once he took up a little of the soft white sand that lay upon the marble floor, and cast it up over the knees of one of the Idols, wishing, as well as fearing, that the Idol would awake, and that its great voice would say something :

12 When the child told his mother of this, and she told his father, it was thought that Gilead should not again be left alone in the temple :

13 For, said Sithron, sadly, The Idol of the Sun can tell us nothing, if it desired to do so. I would that it could tell us something, or that any God, who is not on the earth, would tell us something :

14 The Jewish people are a great people ; verily from the most ancient of ages have they been a great people ; and the more so from their belief in a personal communion with God upon earth, and in his constant and especial care in the greatest things ; yea, and in the smallest things.

15 But seeing that our religion, though, in some things, we do so much differ from our own people, is hated by the Ammonites, and many other nations, for the slaughtering wars waged against them, let not the child risk trouble.

16 And Milkah promised to have care of this:
but she could not at all times be with Gilead :

17 For besides Milkah's work in the Great Temple, she had hired herself to a potter and artificer in earthenware for some hours in the day, to mould cups in clay, and vessels to hold flowers, as she had some natural skill in such arts.

18 So the child Gilead would sometimes escape from his mother's side, and steal into the Great Temple when none else were there ;

19 And he would stand beneath an Idol, trembling with hopes that it might say some kind words to him, or look down upon him kindly.

20 And it came to pass one day that the child spake within himself to an Idol ; and said softly within himself, My lord, art thou like unto me under the garment folds of thy left arm ?

21 For Sithron, my father, often looketh thereon sadly, and speaketh of some great Covenant with a greater God than any here.

22 And if thou bearest a scar like unto mine, O great golden Image ! now do I pray thee look down kindly upon me, a little child.

23 Then Gilead fell asleep at the foot of the Idol, and he saw, in a dream, that the great Image smiled down upon him as he slept.

CHAPTER XIX.

- 1 *David in Hebron.* 2 *Abner sendeth to David, and causeth Ish-bosheth to bring back David's wife Michal to him.* 3 *Abner and Ish-bosheth are murdered.* 4 *David is made King of Israel, and taketh more wives and concubines.* 5 *He smiteth the Philistines by a stratagem, and danceth indecently before the ark.* 6 *David sendeth messengers to the King of the Ammonites, by whom they are treated with great insult.* 7 *David sendeth Joab to lay siege to Rabbah.*

Now there were born unto David in Hebron, a son by Ahinoam, and another son by Abigail, and four other sons by his four other wives.

2 Between the house of Saul and the house of David there was still war ; but after the quarrel between Abner, who had been the chief captain of the hosts of Saul, and Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, a messenger was sent to David by Abner, offering to bring all Israel to him.

3 But David answered, Thou shalt not see my face except thou first bring back Saul's daughter Michal unto me.

4 And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for two hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

5 And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel, the son of Gaish.

6 And Phaltiel her husband went with her along, weeping behind her. Then said Abner to him, Go, return.

7 And he returned ; for he well knew, if he did not, he would presently be unable.

8 After this did Abner speak with the elders of Israel, and in the ears of other elders ; and then he went to David.

9 After he had spoken with David, he departed in peace from Hebron ; but when Joab, the chief captain of David's armies, heard this, he murmured greatly, for he feared the visit had not been in good faith :

10 Besides this fear, Joab knew that Abner had slain his brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

11 So, when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab caused his brother Abishai to conceal himself in the gate, and having taken Abner aside to speak quietly in the gate, behold he smote him under the fifth rib, so that he died.

12 And David lifted up his voice in great lamentation ; and said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel ?

13 Those who had slain Abner did the King denounce as wicked men, saying, The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness ; but David did not seek to punish Joab and Abishai: He left that to the Lord.

14 But David lamented over the death of Abner ; and of Ish-bosheth, who also was found murdered. And no one enquired as to this.

15 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David in Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh ; and they anointed David King over Israel.

16 So the King and his chief men went to dwell in Jerusalem, David being thirty years old when he began to reign.

17 And David said he perceived that the Lord had established him King over Israel ; and that the Lord had exalted his Kingdom for His people Israel's sake.

18 And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron ; and there were yet born eleven more children unto David.

19 And the King rejoiced in his life, and the fullness thereof.

20 But when the Philistines heard that the people had appointed their enemy David to be King over the warlike Jews, they gathered against him,

foreseeing danger ; and they spread themselves over the valley of Rephaim, which was not far from Jerusalem.

21 And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines ? Wilt thou deliver them into my hand ? And the Lord said unto David, Go up : for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thy hand.

22 So David went, and smote them, and they fled away, leaving many Idols behind them, which David and his men burned.

23 But the Philistines, though they were a pastoral people, were yet a people that would fight, and they again offered battle in the same valley to the warlike Jews ; and when David again inquired of the Lord, the Lord said, Thou shalt not go up ; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.

24 And let it be when thou hearest a sound in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself ; for then shall the Lord go out before thee, and smite the host of the Philistines.

25 And David adopted the strategy which the Lord had devised and commanded ; and David smote the Philistines from Gebu unto Gazar.

26 After this, the chosen men of Israel set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out

of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah : and Uzza and Ahis, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

27 And David, and all the house of Israel, played on instruments before the Lord, who seemed ever present with them on the earth ; and they played on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

28 And David danced before the ark with all his might ; and David was girded with a linen ephod : and his wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked through a window, as the ark of the Lord came into the city, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord ; and she despised him in her heart.

29 So when David returned to bless his household, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him, and she said, How glorious was the King of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself.

30 And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, who chose me in preference to thy father Saul, of whom I obtained thee for two hundred foreskins ; and in preference over all thy house.

31 Therefore will I play before the Lord, and I will be base in mine own sight : and of the maidservants of whom thou tellest, of them shall I be had in honour.

32 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death ; for seeing she had been purchased of her father at so high and unusual a price as that of the mutilation of two hundred Philistine men, it was meet she should be punished by the Lord with barrenness.

33 After this, David smote the pastoral Philistines, and he smote Moab ; also David smote Hadadezer, the King of Tobah, and took from him all his chariots, and horsemen, and thousands of footmen ; and when the Syrians came to aid the King of Tobah, David led forth the warlike Jews, and they slew of the Syrians twenty-two thousand ; and the Syrians became his servants :

34 And all Israel said that the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went, and whatsoever he did.

35 And it came to pass after this, that the King of the Children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

36 And David was minded to show kindness to Hanun, in memory of his father's kindness ; so he sent servants to the land of Ammon, even unto their capital city, Rabbah.

37 And Sithron and Milkah were troubled when they heard of this.

38 But when those servants arrived at Rabbah, the princes of the Ammonites said unto Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth this to honour thy father, and that he sendeth true comforters to thee ?

39 Think rather of his invasions at the head of the warlike Jews, against people of many lands, and of his slaughters and pillages; and now think rather that he sendeth these men to search thy city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it.

40 So Hanun, King of Rabbah, remembering all David's wars upon other nations, and his slaughters and plunders, ordered David's messengers to be shaved of one half of their beards, and their garments to be cut off in the middle, even to their buttocks, and then sent away.

41 Now when these messengers were returning, David heard of what had been done, and ordered them not to come to Jerusalem, but to tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown ;

42 And David's wrath was greatly kindled against King Hanun and the people of Ammon, and he sent Joab with a host of mighty men of valour, to lay siege to Rabbah.

CHAPTER XX.

- 1 *The head gardener in Rabbah desireth Milkah, and jealous women plot against her. 2 They accuse the child Gilead of profaning the Temple. 3 People seize Gilead to burn him. 4 Milkah saveth Gilead, and seeketh the high priest, who sendeth for Sithron. 5 Heshlag, the high priest, speaketh of the God of Israel, and the Gods of Rabbath-Ammon. 6 King Hanun commandeth Sithron to be brought before him, and having listened to Sithron, sendeth him away with presents. 7 Joab with the host of the valiant Jews arriveth before the walls of the city.*

THE head gardener of the gardens around the Great Temple, seeing that Milkah was a beautiful young woman, desired her greatly, and often sought to approach her :

2 But although Milkah always avoided this, and seemed not to perceive it, some of the other women who attended to the cleansing of the temple and its precious vessels and adornments, became jealous of her ;

3 And they accused the child Gilead of throwing stones at the Image of the Sun, even of Baal ! though they knew he had only cast up a little white sand.

4 Then arose all the men who worked in the gardens, and the women who attended to cleansing the Temple and its vessels and adornments,

and they laid hands upon the little child, and began to kindle a fire to burn him.

5 But Milkah ran into the midst of them, and she seized and dragged a flaming bough out of the fire they had kindled, and beat about on all sides, so that she bore the child away out of the midst of them.

6 Then hastened she to Heshlag, the high priest, and cast herself at his feet, and told all ;

7 Even of the head gardener, and of the jealous women, and of the child playing with a little sand ; everything told she in truthful words.

8 And Heshlag, the high priest, frowned ; but presently he seemed as he would smile, and gazing in her face, he told her to take the child to the place where his father abode, and then to send Sithron to him.

9 So Milkah carried the child Gilead to the house of Kalkor, the dried fruit-seller ; and Sithron went and appeared before the high priest.

10 I understand all this matter, said the high priest ; place this child safe out of sight for a while. I have heard about thee from Eglonekri, and from others.

11 Thy father was Zelopholek, the astrologer of Hebron, and thou wert driven thence because

thou wert said to be mad about the stars ; also because thou didst cause a little circle of skin to be cut from thy child's elbow, by deluding an aged priest as to the usual rite.

12 All this is true, answered Sithron ; and if thy servant may speak to thee, he will confess as to the nature of his madness.

13 Do this, said the high priest, and I will listen.

14 So Sithron told Heshlag all he thought about the stars.

15 That is well, said the high priest, when Sithron had ceased speaking ; I wonder not that thy people should call thee mad ;

16 For see how all those worlds, thou fanciest to be above us, make the constant attentions of thy God to this one world the more unlike ordinary sense in a God of the Heavens, and all that shine there :

17 Ye children of Israel are in sooth a very strange people as to your idea of a God, for your God seemeth to be very seldom up in Heaven ; but he is almost always down upon the earth ; and upon a very small part of the earth, even the land of the Israelitish people.

18 Thou art an Israelite, and thou knowest all this to be as I say ;

19 For besides conversations with thy earliest patriarchs two or three thousand years ago, was

not thy God continually in Personal communion with Moses and with Samuel, and with Joshua, even as now with your David ?

20 Did they not speak to thy God in person, and obtain answers, and orders, and advice, as to little customs, little rites, and great wars and slaughters ? Deny it if thou canst.

21 Was not thy God always at hand when needed, as if he had been in the next field, or the next house, just over head, or close to the ear ?

22 Is it not thus, to this day ? for doth not David continually make inquiry of the Lord ; and doth not his God immediately reply to David ? Doth not David say this is so ?

23 Of a truth the God of the warlike children of Israel seemeth to be evermore down here, not up there !

24 I have desired thee to speak, young man ; why dost thou remain silent, thou who art an Israelite ?

25 And Sithron only sighed deeply ; but answer made he none.

26 Again spake Heshlag, the high priest of Rabbath-Ammon, and said, Your great law-giver, Moses, hath declared that your God came down from heaven, and alighted upon a mountain to talk with him ; and visibly ; and to dictate Commandments :

27 And all your people of Israel believe this, even unto the present day.

28 But our chief God attendeth to the whole of this Earth as well as Rabbath-Ammon ; and we never expect the Sun of Heaven to come down here to us, to talk with us, and advise us, and fight on our side :

29 So we set up his glorious Image in our Temples ; and we sing hymns to it, and to any other idols of Powers above, and we send up incense, in hopes our prayers may be heard, and our wants known.

30 Dost thou think, O child of Israel, that the Spirit of Baal, even the Sun thou beholdest up yonder, would ever come down, or send a servant down, to a small corner of this our earth, with an order to bake one of its Kings like a hard cake ; and then glut and poison the floor of this king's palace with living and dying frogs,—the air of his city with thick clouds of flies ; and then turn the dust of his lands into lice, because this king was not as dough that could be kneaded, after such hardening ?

31 Answer me, young Israelite, if thou canst : which is the true and greater God,—the one who hath been ever busy during two or three thousand years with a people in one corner of the earth ?—or the God who hath for unknown millions

of years given life and motion to the whole world ?

32 Then answered Sithron, and said, Besides giving life and motion to other worlds in some of the stars ; for this thought, O high priest of Rabbath-Ammon ! hath long been the cause of thy servant's madness, if indeed that charge against him be a true charge, for so it seemeth.

33 Then did Heshlag the high priest, bid his servants bring wine and ripe fruits, and set them before Sithron.

34 But while Sithron sat in silence unable to eat or to drink, for his heart was too high, there came a messenger from the King commanding Sithron to appear before him.

35 So Sithron went, and presented himself humbly before King Hanun.

36 I have been told many things about thee, said the King, and am well pleased that the servants of the Temple did not burn thy child, for I believe no profane acts were intended by thy child or by thy wife.

37 But tell me all thou hast within, about the stars. My chief astrologer is just dead, and I hear thou sayest other things than he, or thy father before thee, said.

38 Then Sithron spake his thoughts about the stars.

39 When he ceased speaking, Hanun smiled, and said to those around him, This young fellow is, no doubt somewhat mad, but there is no evil in him, and there is much good.

40 Then the King ordered his servants to bring a robe, that had been newly made for his chief astrologer that was dead ; and he gave it to Sithron.

41 It was a robe of dark purple silk, covered with silver stars, some large ; and others exceeding small, even like points of fire and light.

42 And to Milkah, the wife of Sithron, who had with such good bravery saved her child from being burned, King Hanun sent bracelets of fine gold, and a necklace of pearls.

43 Now it came to pass as Sithron was returning through the streets of Rabbah, on his way to his wife, who with Gilead their child was now dwelling at the dry fruit store of Kalkor his master, there was a great tumult rising, and the voices of many people in alarm.

44 And the people said that the sentries who were upon the city walls declared there was an armed host coming to lay siege to Rabbah, even a host led by Joab the captain of the armies of the conquering king of Israel.

45 So when Sithron entered the house of his master, he found Milkah in much fear ; for said

she, If Joab take the city, we shall be found, and sent to the priests of Hebron.

46 When Kalkor heard these words, he said, This may be : give me therefore the King's presents to keep secret for you ; even the robe with stars, and the bracelets and necklace.

47 And Sithron gave those things into the hands of Kalkor to lay by in safety ; for the tumult began to increase throughout the city, although the King had many soldiers, and the walls and gates were of great strength.

48 Meanwhile did Hanun exhort his soldiers to be valiant ; and in like manner did Heshlag exhort the people.

CHAPTER XXI.

- ¹ *While Joab besiegeth Rabbah, the King of Israel committeth adultery with Bath-sheba. ² Uriah, her husband, sent for by David, to cover the adultery ; but Uriah resisteth this. ³ Uriah carrieth to Joab a letter from David, to bring about the death of Uriah. ⁴ This is accomplished, and David taketh Bath-sheba to wife.*

NOW it came to pass, while Joab was destroying numbers of the Children of Ammon, before Rabbah, and great numbers also of Syrians, who came to aid them, David had tarried still in Jerusalem.

2 And it came to pass, in an evening tide,

that David arose from his bed, being overheated, and walked upon the roof of his house; and he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

3 And David sent and inquired after the woman. And he was told that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

4 And David sent messengers, who took her; and she came in unto the king, and he lay with her, and she then returned unto her house, Uriah her husband being away at the war.

5 And Bath-sheba conceived; and she sent unto the king, saying, I am with child by thee.

6 Then David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered?

8 And David told Uriah to go down to his own house; for he wished the child of Bathsheba to be thought a child by her husband; and there followed Uriah a mess of meat from the king.

9 But Uriah went not down to his house, but slept at the door of the king's house; so the mess of meat was of no avail.

10 And when this was told to David, he said

unto Uriah, Camest thou not from a journey ?
Why then did'st thou not go down to thy house ?

11 And Uriah, being a holy soldier of the Lord, said unto David, The Ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord the king are encamped in the open field ; shall I then go into mine house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife ?

12 As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

13 And David said to Uriah, Tarry in Jerusalem this day, and to-morrow I will let thee depart.

14 And on the morrow when David had called Uriah, he did eat and drink before the king ; and the king made him drunk ; but nevertheless in the evening Uriah went not down to his house, but lay on his bed among the servants of his lord the king.

15 So David, in the morning, wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah :

16 And David wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, so that he may be smitten and die.

17 Therefore, when Joab next assaulted the city of Rabbah, he assigned Uriah unto a place among the most valiant men.

18 And the soldiers of Rabbah came forth, and fought against the soldiers of Joab, and there fell a number of the servants of David ; and Uriah, the husband of Bath-sheba, died among them.

19 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war ; and that some of the king's servants had been slain, and that Uriah, the Hittite, was also dead.

20 And when Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

21 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son, even the son she had conceived when the king first committed adultery with her.

22 Now the thing that David had done displeased the Lord ; but not deeply.

23 For the terrible threats of Nathan, the prophet, who was sent by the Lord unto David, that the sword should never depart from his house, because he had slain Uriah, and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be his wife, were not really visited upon him ;

24 For the Lord, as Nathan said, hath put away thy sin, so that David should not die : but that the child that had been born of Bath-sheba should die instead, as seemed just.

25 So the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick, and though David prayed in great grief and fasted, the child died on the seventh day; seeming just.

26 Then David fasted and wept no longer, saying, Can I bring him back again?

27 And David comforted Bath-sheba, his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her, and she bare another son, and he called his name Solomon, and the Lord loved him.

28 Now these things being heard of by Sithron and Milkah, they marvelled exceedingly as to the man said to be after God's own heart:

29 For besides the number of David's wives and concubines, they marvelled at many other things, even looking back unto the days of Moses; whose son had not been circumcised till Zipporah, his wife, took a sharp stone by the road side, and performed the act of blood.

30 Then did Zipporah cry unto Moses that he was a bloody husband; even Moses, who was soon to be the chosen servant of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXI.

- 1 A messenger from Joab informeth David of his success in the siege, and calleth on David to come in great battle-array. 2 Sithron prepareth to give himself up to the emissaries of the priests of Hebron; but Milkah proposeth they should secrete themselves. 3 Sithron goeth to his master Kalkor for the robe and jewels, but Kalkor denieth him, and casteth insult on Milkah. 4 Sithron and Milkah secrete themselves. 5 The great battle-array of the King of Israel is beheld from the walls of Rabbah.*

Now from Joab came a messenger to the king of Israel, counselling that his lord the king should leave Bath-sheba, and all his other wives and women, in Jerusalem, and come to Rabbah in great battle-array, and reap the glory of the fall thereof, lest the glory should be given to the name of Joab.

2 The tidings of preparations for the coming of the King of Israel being brought to Rabbah by merchants and others, Sithron prepared to give himself up to such of the secret emissaries of the priests of Hebron as he knew to be in the city;

3 For then, said he to Milkah, the pursuit of you and our child Gilead will cease, and if they put me to death, I shall not feel it, but rejoice in saving you, and in thus ending the life I lead, as of a hunted creature of the woods.

4 But Milkah could not hear Sithron speak

thus ; and she urged him to get a bag of dried fruits from his master Kalkor, and pay for it with the necklace which the King of Rabbah had sent to her :

5 And then they could find some old ruin, or other place among the deserted outskirts of the city, and there hide themselves till they found means to escape to some other land.

6 So Sithron her husband, not very willingly, nor indeed very hopefully as to their safe hiding place, went to Kalkor, sitting within the walls of his house, and asked him for the robe and the necklace which had been placed in his care.

7 But said Sithron, as for the bracelets, thou can'st retain one of them in payment of a bag of dried fruits, which I pray thee to give me forthwith.

8 Hearing these words, Kalkor sat silent awhile, and then ordered one of his servants to bring to Sithron a large bag of dried fruits.

9 And when the bag was brought and given to Sithron, his master Kalkor said, There is the bag of dried fruits, and I bestow it upon you of my own free grace, as I see you and your wife intend to leave me.

10 But the necklace, said Sithron, and the robe, presented to my wife Milkah, and to me, where are they ?

11 Then Kalkor rose from his seat, as if in great wrath, and said, Begone, robber of the king's palace! I know nothing of the dark corner wherein you have concealed such things.

12 Then said Sithron, very mildly, Thou knowest well that those things were given to me by the king, and if they have been stolen, it is not I that am the thief.

13 Hearing these words, Kalkor smote upon the wall, and said, Begone from my sight, and quickly, thou mad starrer-up at stars, else will I order thee to be beaten, and that bag of dried fruits taken from thee!

14 But Sithron stood still, with deep sighs. And he then said to Kalkor, Do not, I pray thee, think these my sad sighs are for the things that have been stolen from me, but for the falsehood and the wickedness of mankind.

15 And having said these words, Sithron turned meekly away, and passed out at the door.

16 But the wrath of Kalkor being kindled at what Sithron had last said, he followed him to the threshold, calling after him, I have heard of *other* necklaces and ornaments given to thy wife Milkah;—the head gardener of the Temple had not her smiles for nought!

17 Having thus called out in his rage, Kalkor returned within the door-way; but suddenly he

saw Sithron coming back with quite another face, so that Kalkor scarcely knew it was he, and was frightened at his eyes.

18 And Sithron leapt upon Kalkor, and seized him by both his ears, and thrust him backwards against the wall;

19 And Sithron then whirled Kalkor round, and flung him against the door-way, so that Kalkor fell upon the floor howling and gasping, for he was a heavy man.

20 Then ran several of Kalkor's servants into the room, and took up Kalkor, who ordered them, as soon as he could speak, to seize Sithron, for he had made off with a bag of dried fruits for which he had not paid any money.

21 But Sithron was gone; and although the servants pursued him, they could not overtake him; for Sithron, being light of limb and fleet of foot, was presently out of sight.

22 Now all the people in the city were in agitation, and all the soldiers and men capable of bearing arms were in motion, and there is much consternation because of the approach of the warlike King of Israel, and his array of battle.

23 For although the city had been nearly taken more than once by Joab, the danger now seemed greatly increased.

24 So without observation, Sithron and Mil-

kah, with their child Gilead, found secret shelter at the foot of an old ruined tower, near the inner walls of an obscure part of the city.

25 And the sound of the coming of David, king of Israel, was very great; yea the coming in wrath, and in great array of battle of the man who was said by his people to be after God's own heart.

26 And this sound of David's coming was like the sound of mighty waters rolling onwards from the desert; and like the voice of many thunder-clouds; and like the four winds in their fury, when the tempest singeth a psalm of destruction:

27 And as the battle-array of the King advanced nearer to the walls of Rabbah, it joined and enfolded all the army of Joab, which was lost in it.

28 And the sound of many great trumpets, and of cymbals, and of all instruments of terrible sound, was heard with tremblings of the air, and of the hearts of the people within the walls of Rabbah.

29 And when it was noon-tide, the soldiers, and all the armed people that stood on the outer walls of the city, beheld a thousand chariots of polished brass, with the blazing face of the sun retorted from the face of each of the chariots of polished brass;

30 And in each chariot stood a mighty captain of the great battle array of the warlike King, lifting up the flashing blade of his spear, while dazlingshields, and points of other spears flashed from those who stood close behind him.

31 And in the centre came the war-chariot of the King of Israel, a large war-chariot of burnished gold, wherefrom the sun looked glaring with a larger face than from the polished breast-plates of all the other of the thousand chariots that came with David before the walls of Rabbah.

32 And all those who stood on the walls of the city, beheld the coming of the warlike King of Israel, like unto the coming of the great day of Judgment.

33 And Hanun, King of Rabbah, who stood among them, knew as his blinded eyes closed before all those blazing suns that were rolling onwards in a half-circle towards Rabbah, that both he and Rabbah now beheld their own sun for the last time.

34 But Hanun spake no word.

35 Neither did Heshlag utter any word.

36 But the soldiers and the people breathed low sounds as of a stifling sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

- 1 *A captain of hosts offereth counsel to David, and a priest from Hebron offereth counsel also. 2 Sithron, with his wife and child, are starving; and Sithron, being lame, Milkah goeth forth to seek for food. Milkah is seized by secret emissaries; but her life is spared, providing she will lead them to their hiding-place. 4 Milkah leadeth them astray. 5 She reacheth the hiding-place, and findeth the child Gilead is dead. 6 Sithron and Milkah bury Gilead.*

Now one of the captains of the hosts of David was a wise man in his generation, and he stepped out of his brazen chariot and came to the King of Israel :

2 And he said, Let my Lord the King listen to the words of his servant, and grant a few days to the people of Rabbah to open their gates; so that their city may not be taken with fire and devastation :

3 For the city containeth many riches in gold and in silver vessels in the King of Rabbah's palaces, and in the Temples and great houses :

4 And, in especial, they have great images in gold and in silver of their Gods, which would be destroyed by fire, instead of being carried away to Jerusalem, and melted and moulded for holy vessels, and for goblets and cups in the house of the King of Israel.

5 Then David answered and said, Let it be made known to the people of Rabbah that a few days shall be granted before I assault the city with fire and devastation, if afterwards they open wide all the great gates ;

6 And also if they bring out to me in the meanwhile, Hanun, King of Rabbah, on whom I will heap goodly punishment for the insult of shaving, and of cutting off the hinder half of the garments of my messengers, and sending them back to me with shame and mockery.

7 Presently after David had thus spoken, there came before him a priest from Hebron, and said, Let the ear of my Lord the King hear, that somewhere in the city of Rabbah, a blasphemer, a reviler, and a mocker of Jehovah's most holy Covenant of Circumcision, hath been knowingly harboured, together with his wife, and their whelp, the still uncircumcised child :

8 The man's name is Sithron : let him also, O King, with his wife and their whelp, be brought forth, and delivered up to thee ; and also Heshlag, the high priest, who hath shown much favour towards them.

9 And David answered and said, I have heard of this great iniquity, this breaking of the first great Covenant of our Lord God ; not only in Hebron, but in Jerusalem hath this iniquity

in the sight of Jehovah and of the children of Israel been talked about loudly.

10 Therefore, let it be known to the people of Rabbah, that they must bring forth unto me this Sithron, and his wife, and their heathen child, together with Hanun the king, and Heshlag their high priest, or I will presently destroy their city with fire and sword, and every living thing within it.

11 Now when these words of the warlike King of Israel were made known far and wide in the besieged city, there was great consternation, but also many disputes :

12 For, said some, How know we what this David will do when once he is within our gates?

13 And others said, Our gates are strong gates, and our walls are high and strong walls, and our brave captains and soldiers are all complete and natural men, and not like these mutilated Israelites ; and as we have several times beaten back the mighty man of valour Joab, why may not we now beat back this circumcised son of Jesse, the son of all sorts of circumcised Jews ?

14 And others said, Our King is a good king, and a king much beloved ; and how can we give him up to this David, who hath hanged many Kings upon trees, and wrought divers cruelties upon them beforehand ?

15 And others said, What know we of the hiding-place of this Sithron, who is also demanded of us? and what care we that his child hath had a little circle of skin cut from his elbow, instead of being barbarously cut from the infant organs of generation?

16 As for the King of Rabbah, himself, it can be no marvel that he went not forth unto David.

17 Now Sithron and Milkah, in their obscure hiding-place at the foot of the ruined tower, heard not at first of these things, and as Sithron had lost nearly all the dried fruits, in his flight from the servants of Kalkor, and had been hurt by a fall among broken stones, so that he was lame, Milkah went forth to seek for food, because they were all faint with hunger.

18 But while Milkah was seeking for bread all the morning, among the people who were hurrying hither and thither, she was recognized by some of the secret emissaries from the priests of Hebron:

19 And presently Milkah was seized, and hurried away to a house in a by-street.

20 And the men demanded of her where Sithron, her husband, and their uncircumcised child were hidden;

21 But she would not tell them ; so they prepared to put her to death :

22 And they kindled a fire to burn her ; and took her to the fire, and burnt away half of her long hair.

23 But Milkah would not answer them :

24 During three days would she make no answer, though the fire was ready all that time.

25 The men then took counsel together.

26 After a while, one came to Milkah and said, We promise to do our best with the great priests to save thy life, and also the lives of Sithron, thy husband, and thy outcast child, if thou wilt lead us to the place where they lie concealed ?

27 And Milkah answered, and said, Give me some food, to eat by the way, for else I shall not have strength to lead you, as the place is some way off.

28 So, the men gave Milkah bread, and water to drink, and dates to eat by the way ; and then she went forth, telling the men to follow at a little distance, lest Sithron should see them coming.

29 And Milkah led the men on through by-ways of the city, hour after hour, seeming to have lost her way, until nightfall :

30 And when the night grew dark, and the men waxed angry, she eluded them, and hid herself.

31 And when they had given up searching for her, and had turned back in great anger, Milkah came forth, very faint, but she was able to find Sithron and her child.

32 And as Milkah came near, she held out her sleeve full of dates, for she had eaten none herself, saying, Here is food.

33 But when Milkah came close into the dark recess within the foot of the broken tower, she found the boy was dead.

34 And the arms of the dead child were cold and stiff round the neck of Sithron his father, so that they could not be removed.

35 But after a time, and with many feeble efforts, and after many sad words, and loving words, the arms of the child were unclasped from his father's neck, so that he could be laid down upon the ground.

36 And Sithron, his father, and Milkah, his mother, buried the child Gilead beneath the dry leaves and undergrowths that were thick in the recess within the foot of the tower, where for some while they had made their daily abode, and their bed by night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1 *The King of Israel giveth orders to assault the city.* 2 *The host of the warlike Jews advanceth.* 3 *They are met by a fierce storm of wind.* 4 *David prayeth to the Lord; but the storm doth not at all abate.*

Now the great captains and people of Rabbah having refused to bring forth Hanun, their King, and Heshlag, their high priest, to be placed in the hands of the Israelites; and also having refused to cast open their gates, David was exceeding wrath:

2 And David gave orders to Joab, and his mighty men of valour, to assault the city of Rabbah;

3 To beat down the strong gates, and make gaps in the great walls, and to destroy the city and the people with fire and sword after the spoil had been safely carried away.

4 So all the chariots of carved brass, and of burnished brass, of iron, and of gold, advanced in a great crescent when the sun rose high, and shone upon all the chariots, and the helmets and shields of gold, to the sound and the terror of trumpets, and cymbals, of all manner of warlike instruments, and of timbrels made from the dried

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back and belly-skins of uncircumcised Philistines, and other worshippers of false Gods :

5 And behind them came the spearmen ; and behind these the thousands with double-edged swords ; and behind these, the archers ; and behind these, came many thousand horsemen.

6 And the horsemen began to spread themselves widely, and then to surround the whole city, so that not a man, woman, or child, should escape the edge of the sword.

7 For such was the will of the King of Israel, yea, of the man whom his people beheld as after Jehovah's own heart.

8 And now, in front of all the advancing crescent, there ran seven hundred men, clad in thick garments which had been soaked in water, and bearing fire-brands all a-blaze ;

9 And the bearers of the blazing brands hastened towards the great gates of the city, and towards the great walls.

10 But before they gat near enough to cast any brand over the gates, or even the walls, it came to pass that a mighty wind arose, yea a storm of wind that darkened all the air ;

11 So that all the host of the warlike Jews, yea the host of the King of Israel, was smitten with deep shadow ; and all the chariots, and helmets, and shields, and the footmen and horse-

men, became as phantoms and fleeting shadows of night.

12 And the black storm of wind swept roaring and hissing round the angles of the city, and met the darkened hosts of the King of Israel, so that they were beaten back.

13 The torches of the foremost men had been extinguished and cast upon the ground ; and behold the mighty hosts of David turned, and fled in darkness, in confusion, and in terror.

14 Verily, said the soothsayers, and such of the priests of Jerusalem and of Hebron as were with them, Verily, the Lord of Hosts is this day against his servants !

15 David now prayed to God that this storm should cease ; and he besought the Lord that if it continued, it should be changed in its course ;

16 Yea, changed entirely, so that it might turn back and pass away over the city of Rabbah.

17 But while the King of Israel prayed, the wind that had driven him back, continued to rage with the same fury.

18 Then spake several of the priests from Hebron, and from Jerusalem ;

19 And they said, Behold the face of the Lord of Hosts is surely turned against us this day !

CHAPTER XXIV.

1 Heshlag speaketh to the King of Rabbah, and to the soldiers and the people. 2 They gain courage and issue forth to battle. 3 Sithron and Milkah are without food. 4 Milkah dieth. 5 Sithron hath now a lightened heart to meet all that is to come.

Now, when the people of Rabbah saw the great trouble that had fallen from Heaven upon the army of the Israelites, they gathered courage and held counsel among themselves.

2 But the great captains and soldiers had done this also; and they went to beseech the King to send them forth from the gates in pursuit of the besiegers.

3 While Hanun was deliberating on this, there came unto him Heshlag, who explained unto the King that the God of Israel had now refused to listen to their prayers, and had even turned his fury against them :

4 Then Heshlag stood upon the high chariot of one of the Philistine princes, and spake unto the soldiers and the people around.

5 And Heshlag said, Have ye not long since known that the God of the Jews is a low and earthly God; and also a capricious God?

6 For is he not constantly down upon the earth among this one nation of the earth, attending to all manner of low things and very small matters ?

7 Hath he not taught some of his prophets and leaders how to invade and take spoil ; and also to commit thefts ?

8 And are we not told in the writings of some of their great prophets, that their God has come down to teach them to make burnt offerings ; also how to make clothes ; also he hath taught them masonry and carpenter's work, and other such common things of the earth.

9 And this cannot have been told as a parable, or as a figure of words ; for the things were made and done according to Jehovah's teaching ; as his priests declare.

10 Then also as to the capriciousness and fury of their God, do they not show it forth in all manner of ways ?

11 Lo ! now we see another caprice in this storm of wind, which plainly declareth that their God hath come over to our side, even as yonder David once came over to the side of the King of Gath.

12 Therefore ye see that our ancient enemies, the robbers of so many of our fertile lands for their inheritance, are about to fall before us.

13 Then all the soldiers shouted aloud, and so did all the people.

14 Thus, the people of Rabbah had now their own God on their side, together with the God of the Jews ; and thus their ancient and most remorseless enemies were now in their hands.

15 So Hanun, the King of Rabbah, and his chief captains, hastened joyfully through the gates of the city, and pursued the retreating army of David.

16 And Heshlag, the high priest, went in the midst of them, and exhorted the soldiers in the name of the All-ruling Sun, even of the mighty BAAL !

17 Now, the storm of darkness and wind that drove back the Israelites, and the clamour of the pursuers of them by Hanun, King of Rabbah, became known to Sithron and Milkah, where they sat starving at the foot of the hollow tower.

18 And Sithron rose up and said to Milkah, Thou art drooping, my love, and thou diest for lack of food.

19 The dried fruits which I was bringing to thee, were mostly lost by the way, when I ran beyond the men who would have seized me on a false charge :

20 The dates which thou broughtest hither, for me and for Gilead, instead of eating them thyself by the way, to sustain thy strength, are all gone ;

21 And the wild fruits and berries from the brambles around us, have been stripped from the last twigs that bore them.

22 Now therefore will I go forth to seek bread for thee and for me ; and take thou no fear for my safety during this time when all men's thoughts are far from us.

23 And Milkah looked into the face of Sithron, and laid her hand upon his hand, and clasped him round the neck.

24 And Milkah said, Kiss me my beloved ! Kiss Milkah the wife of thy heart of hearts, for lo ! she must now leave thee.

25 O Sithron, my husband ! my beloved, the first love of my eyes when I saw thee sleeping among my father's sheep ; the first love of my thoughts, the constant love of my bosom and of my soul ever after.

26 Kiss me, my Sithron ! and take thy dying Milkah's last loving sigh, her last thoughts, her last look.

27 And Sithron folded her in his arms, and bent closely over her as she sank back upon their bed of dry leaves.

28 And Sithron received the last loving sigh of Milkah, his beloved, and her last thoughts, and her last looks.

29 So Milkah died in the arms of Sithron, and he sank down with her, and remained with her folded in his arms all that day, and all the night that followed.

CHAPTER XXV.

1 *Sithron mourneth over Milkah.*

Now Sithron, kneeling beside the body of Milkah, prayed aloud in the morning light.

2 And Sithron said, Here then thou liest, all so cold and rigid, O Milkah, my beloved, who to me wert ever so warm, and softly moving with loving life and thoughts.

3 Thou foundest me naked on the hills, like a weed in the morning dew, and thou didst gather me up, and place me in thy beautiful bosom, O my love !

4 And thou didst listen to me when I spake of the stars, and while all others regarded me as a poor fool without reason, thou didst smile in my face with the brightness of love, even as

yonder heavens have often smiled upon me, their lost and ever wondering child.

5 Open thine eyes upon me, O my beloved, and come back to me! Open, once again, thine eyes upon Sithron, thy husband!

6 If only for a moment, open those sealed lids!

7 She openeth not her eyes for a moment: Milkah will never again behold her Sithron.

8 Let the stars also be blind to me henceforth; for I have seen enough of all things.

9 I desire to behold no more of anything till again I meet thee, beautiful at dawn among the silent hills and sheep-folds of death, O Milkah!

10 Now am I alone; but thou art not alone, for Gilead, the son of our love, is also dead, and lying in thine arms.

11 Soon shall I follow thee, soon shall I again be with thee, and with Gilead the child of our bodies and of our souls.

12 Wait for me, wait a little while for me, O Milkah my best of life; thou who foundest me as a trodden weed, but who livedst to know me as one inspired, yea, as one not altogether mad.

13 And if indeed I be mad, it is not the madness that is born of earth, and of earth's thoughts and deeds, but the madness of a brain lost in the glories of night, and the unseen glories that are above the night, and above the day.

14 O beautiful wife of the Lost-one! he biddeth thee sleep sweetly beside the child of our devotions,—O Milkah! the morning light of heaven that came down to bless Sithron.

15 Now when Sithron had thus prayed, he arose, and felt ready for all things, being full of strength by the loss of all fear for those he loved.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1 *Hanun, King of Rabbah, overtaketh the retreating army of Israel.* 2 *The storm ceaseth, and confusion changeth sides.* 3 *David and Joab check the flight of their host.* 4 *The Israelites turn upon their pursuers.* 5 *David extolleth and blesseth the wisdom and strategy of the Lord.* 6 *The two armies reach the open gates at the same time.* 7 *What the conquerors do.*

Now, the soldiers who had issued from the city of Rabbah, led onward by Hanun, their King, and exhorted by Heshlag, their high priest, overtook the army of the Israelites retiring amidst the dark hurricane of wind that had driven them away.

2 And with loud cries of scorn and hatred, and the sound of brazen instruments, the tossing and flapping of banners, and their curses of the

circumcised besiegers, the soldiers of Rabbah fell upon the Israelites, and commenced a great slaughter of their enemies.

3 But the dark tempest dropped its fury, ceasing almost on a sudden, and as the wind swept away over the hills, the sky became clear.

4 The confusion that had been among the soldiers of Israel, now began among the soldiers of Rabbah, and the King of Israel called upon Joab that he should bring his men into order.

5 And this was done, and the Israelites turned and fought with the soldiers of Rabbah, and drove them back towards the city.

6 And David took Hanun the King of Rabbah prisoner, and also Heshlag their high priest.

7 And David praised the Lord God aloud, and extolled the wisdom of the Lord in what he had done to throw their enemies into his hands.

8 And David said, Behold our Lord is a man of war, and the Lord is as a cunning God, and though he often fighteth on our side by means of the sword, and with fire, and with hail stones, he sometimes leadeth his chosen people to victory by cunning strategy.

9 Even as ye witnessed before, at Baal perezim, and at the mulberry-trees of the valley of Rephaim; and as ye heard of the taking of

Ai by Joshua, the son of Nun, as Joshua and Samuel have recorded.

10 And the priests from Jerusalem, and the priests from Hebron that were with the hosts of the warlike Jews, blessed the Lord when they heard these words ; and they also glorified his servant David, to whose prayers the Lord had always listened.

11 And it came to pass that the Ammonites were so closely pursued by the soldiers of Israel, even unto the gates of the city, that there was no time to close the gates behind them ;

12 For the besiegers entered with them, making slaughter of their captains and men of valour, as well as of great numbers of their soldiers.

13 Then began the slaughter of the people within the city, which continued during the rest of the day, as the Hebrew chronicle recordeth.

14 Old men, and women, and children were all put to the sword, except only very young women and girls, who were given over to the priests of Israel as offerings before the Lord, even as was done in former times when thousands of virgins were given by one of the great Jewish conquerors to one of the great Jewish priests, before the Lord.

15 And great numbers of young virgins were

also given to the chief captains and mighty men of valour of the host of Israel, as part of the spoils of war.

16 And when night was come, the greatest numbers of the people, which the soldiers had not time enough as yet to put to the sword, were driven into temples and palaces, and other large edifices, to be kept as cattle in pens till the next day.

17 So the army of Jehovah's chosen people passed the greater part of the night in feasting, and making merry, and collecting all sorts of spoils of war, besides the young women and girls that had already been given over to them.

18 And David commanded preparations to be made for the building of brick-kilns to burn people slowly, or partially, before they were utterly slain.

19 For David bore well in mind the insult that his messengers had received when he first sent them to Rabbah.

20 And David also ordered men to prepare great saws of iron, and axes of iron, and iron harrows, as instruments of torture.

21 So the victorious soldiers of Israel had much cause for enjoyment during the night by reason of all they had, and of what they were to witness next day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

- 1 Sithron watcheth by the grave of Milkah and their child.
2 He meditateth what manner of death he is like to die.
3 The spirit of Zelopholek appeareth before him, and speaketh great words unto him. 4 Afterwards there riseth before Sithron three spirits—of Mehetabel, and of Milkah and Gilead.*

Lo! where one, star-stricken and forlorn of aspect, sitteth at night by the graves of his two beloved dead.

2 He sitteth mourning in deep silence, and there is no sound near him, or around him, except the moaning of the winds through the broken stone-work of the ruined tower;

3 And the rustling of the dry leaves in front of his seat, and the dropping night-dews of the brambles that grow amidst the shattered walls above him.

4 And he sitteth in darkness, but he doth not know it; and he is cold, and doth not know it; and he is hungry and athirst, and taketh no note of it:

5 For all that he knoweth is the loss of Milkah and of their child.

6 Behold now in the darkness before him, he

seemeth to perceive there ariseth a pale misty gleam, as of a lighted smoke rising from the damp earth ;

7 And amidst the pale light of the mist he seeth something of a form like unto the form of a living man.

8 And the form becometh not distinct nor of human shape, even when the gleaming mist grew settled around him.

9 But Sithron feeleth that it must be the spirit of his father ; yea, the spirit risen up of Zelo-pholek, his father.

10 And the spirit that was now risen up seemeth to be speaking with a voice not like the voice of one upon the earth :

11 For indeed it was no voice that could truly be heard, or, if heard, then heard only in the spirit of the one now spoken to, even Sithron, the star-stricken.

12 And the voice that belonged not to earth, could yet be heard by the soul of the one to whom it spake ; and could be understood of him.

13 And the voice said, O clear Star ! O child, born with the nativity of a new star ! O son of the stars, destined to be lost among them, behold O Bar-Kochbah ! how thy father blesseth thee in the hour of thine affliction ;

14 And the hour of thine approaching death.

15 For now do I well understand that thou shouldest rather have been the father of Zelopholek, than he the father of thee ;

16 Because that thy madness in the sight of the people, was far more high and more deep in truth and in wisdom than thy father's visions and his figures, and his devices, and his sooth-sayings before princes and men who were empty.

17 Lo ! the wonders of mine art have become as meteors and delusions, and what I believed to be strong are as figures drawn upon bright sand.

18 Now, behold how thy father extolleth thee, and blesseth thee !

19 Thy father's spirit kisseth thee, and doeth honour to thee for thy greater wisdom.

20 So the phantom of Zelopholek departed with an upraised finger, and was no more seen.

21 And Sithron fell upon his face, with prayers to God, and thanksgivings.

22 Thus would he have remained long upon his knees, but a new vision rose before him.

23 For lo ! in the place where the spirit of his father had been seen, there came through the shades of the night two other forms.

24 And as they became more distinct, Sithron saw that there were three forms :

25 Even the forms of Mehetabel, his mother,

and of Milkah, his wife, bearing Gilead in her arms.

26 Then a voice which seemed to come from Mehetabel, said to Sithron,

27 Lo! where a high monument of marble was raised up by rich men of Hebron, seeking to honour themselves by honouring the name of Zelopholek after he was dead.

28 In his old age and his blindness they took no note of him.

29 But when they came to hear of thee, Sithron, my son, O son of my mystery, and son of yet greater mysteries in Heaven, and that thou beheldest the Creator of All Things as so far greater than the God of Abraham, and all his race (whom they so familiarly worshipped, seeming ever close at hand and within hearing), they were wroth.

30 And they revenged themselves upon themselves, believing the revenge fell upon thee :

31 For they have broken and cast down the marble monument they raised to thy father's name, and have trampled the fragments in the dust of their own vanity and folly.

32 Sing! son of the stars! sing amidst all thy misery.

33 Then the spirit of Mehetabel smiled upon her son, and put forth her hands as to bless him.

34 And the spirit of the child Gilead also smiled upon his father, and put forth his hands towards him.

35 But when the eyes of Sithron met the eyes of Milkah, her eyes which seemed about to smile, even as Mehetabel and Gilead had smiled, did not smile, but remained fixed upon his face.

36 And then her eyes, which smiled not, became all tears, and there was no sight in them :

37 For her tears flowed down into her bosom, as it were rain ; but no word spake she.

38 Then did Sithron start to his feet, being no longer able to bear what he saw.

39 And he held out both arms opened to embrace Milkah :

40 But there was no longer anything before him that he could embrace.

41 For all he had beheld was melted away into the shades and uncertainties of night.

42 And after a time, while he still stood with his arms extended, the sighs of the wind breathed over him, and the soft uncertain moanings of night came to his ear ;

43 Also the falling of the drops of dew from the leaves of the brambles and the weeds in the flaws of the stones above his head.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

- 1 *David ordereth the rich spoil to be brought forth.* 2 *And he commandeth the tortures to be prepared.* 3 *Sithron climbeth to the top of the ruined tower, and witnesseth the tortures.* 4 *David taketh the crown from King Hanun's head.* 5 *Heshlag is also brought forth, and stripped.* 6 *Sithron descendeth from the tower, to meet death.*

Now when the morning was come, David ordered seven trumpets to be sounded, as a signal that all the great spoils of war should be brought forth.

2 So the soldiers, attended by many slaves, and many of the people of the city, brought forth costly things from the palace of the King of Rabbah, and great golden Idols, and vessels of silver set thick with precious stones, from the temples of Baal, and rich robes and jewels and armour, from the palaces and great houses of all the princes and priests, and captains, and merchants;

3 And all these things were laid in shining heaps before the King of Israel, so that he should take what seemed best for himself, and apportion the rest for Joab, and the other great captains, and the priests from Jerusalem and from Hebron who were with him ;

4 And all that remained, together with all that was contained in the houses of the people,

was to be taken by the soldiers and divided among themselves before the city was made a heap of ruins and foul smoke.

5 Of the young women and girls, the division of that part of the spoil had been made already, but all the rest of the women had been put to the sword, except those who having infants at the breast, had hidden themselves.

6 The seven trumpets were again sounded, and the brick-kilns were lighted, and the saws of iron, and the axes of iron, and the harrows with iron teeth, which David had commanded to be prepared, were placed as he directed.

7 Now the sound of the seven trumpets reached the walls of the broken tower where Sithron was lying with his arms enfolding the dead body of Milkah, his wife.

8 And Sithron felt that his last hour was at hand.

9 And he embraced once again the cold form of the wife of his bosom, and with gentle hands he covered her over with dry leaves and boughs.

10 And Sithron was glad that Milkah was dead, and safe from further harm ;

11 And he felt as one lightened of a load, who now hath no care what may come, and no care for himself.

12 And while the trumpets were still sounding, Sithron climbed up the broken stones that remained of the winding stairs inside the hollow tower.

13 And when at last he had reached the top, he looked over the broken parapet, and beheld what was doing below some way off.

14 The reddening smoke of the hot brick-kilns was rising above the house-tops of the city.

15 And Sithron looking down beheld the King of Israel, and Joab, his great captain, and the priests from Jerusalem, and from Hebron ; and soldiers with swords standing in rows behind, and soldiers with spears behind them, and many horsemen behind all.

16 And these rows stood in a half-circle behind David seated on a high seat, in front of whom Sithron beheld the instruments of torture lying ready upon the ground, with the heated brick-kilns also ready, near at hand.

17 Then beheld he great numbers of the people brought out of the palaces, and temples, and great houses where they had been packed close, like steaming cattle, during the night.

18 Among them were many old men, and women with infants in their arms ; and these were at once driven into the brick-kilns, which were glowing with heat :

19 And Sithron then beheld numbers of the people put under the saws of iron, and sawn asunder ; and others, laid down in rows close together, and torn in pieces by the iron harrows that were dragged over them by horses ; and others that were hewn in fragments by those who had charge of the iron axes :

20 And while the air was racked with the cries, and the screams, and the groans, and the curses of the tortured people, Sithron bethought him of how often he had heard David called by the Israelites the man after God's own heart.

21 And Sithron bethought him that those who had said this were blasphemers of God, for the sake of glorifying David.

22 Now the torturers, and the soldiers with the axes, having made an end of most of the people before sun-set, Sithron beheld a great frame-work of iron brought forth, even the iron bed-stead which had belonged to Og, King of Bashan.

23 For after Moses had slain the giant king of pastoral Bashan, and taken possession of his fertile lands, and his verdant hills covered with mighty oaks, he sent Og's iron bedstead to Rabbah, where it had been kept ever since, though much coveted as a trophy by the children of Israel.

24 So this great bedstead of iron was fixed, some thirty cubits in front of where David sat ; and Sithron then beheld soldiers coming from the Palace of Waters, even from the Royal part of the city, bringing with them Hanun, King of Rabbah, with his great golden crown upon his head.

25 And the King of Rabbah was made to stand with bare feet in the middle of the iron bedstead, with his crown upon his head, in memory of the insult he had offered to the messengers of David.

26 And it had been told to David that this crown of gold with its jewels, was of the weight of a Jewish talent of gold ; which being a weight that no man's head could bear, was but a lying tale.

27 Nevertheless, the King of Israel desired to have that crown, and ordered it to be taken from the King of Rabbah.

28 So this was done, and Sithron saw the crown placed upon David's head.

29 When this was done, the torturers approached, bringing with them Heshlag, the High Priest of the Temple of Baal, in his richest robes :

30 And they stripped off the High Priest's robes, with taunts and revilings from all the Priests who were among the hosts of Israel ; and after he was naked, the torturers made him sit down with his back close to the feet of Hanun.

31 And because of the counsels that Heshlag had given to the King of Rabbah, and to the princes and soldiers, to pursue the army of Israel when they retreated before the storm of wind, besides that he was the Chief Priest of uncircumcised worshippers of false Gods, they prepared some prolonged tortures both for him and for King Hanun.

32 Now when Sithron beheld what was about to be done, he cried to heaven with a loud voice that his own hour of martyrdom was come :

33 And he descended from the top of the tower, as quickly as he could, and made for the scene of the tortures.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1 *Sithron hasteneth to present himself for martyrdom.* 2 *David sayeth what he will do to the other cities of Ammon.* 3 *Sithron appeareth before David, declaring who he is.* 4 *David and the priests believe that he is possessed of devils.* 5 *Sithron denounceth the Covenant of the God of Moses, and defiecth David and the priests.* 6 *He believeth in a greater God than the God of Abraham and Moses.*

Now Sithron made his way, as best he might, across the broken ways and deserted streets; often throwing up both arms with wild cries, as

of a sea-bird that hath lost its mate, and seeketh death from the same hands.

2 And the King of Israel sat on a high seat, surrounded by Joab and his great captains and mighty men of valour, and soldiers; and he looked well pleased upon the mass of mangled bodies that lay before him :

3 And David said, Thus will I do, even as ye now behold, unto the people of all the other cities of the heathen children of Ammon, the worshippers of false Gods ; yea, before I return unto Jerusalem.

4 So the priests who were with David cried aloud, Verily thou art a man after God's own heart.

5 Now Sithron was no longer like unto himself, as he had been ; neither was he like any man.

6 His hair, which had once been silken and flowing, had much rotted on his head from grief and no care for cleanliness, and what remained was not like unto hair, but like rank and blighted grass.

7 And he had the fever of a starving man upon him, and also the fever of a broken heart.

8 So when Sithron came among the soldiers well nigh naked, with blighted grass upon his head, and gleaming eyes, as of fire that playeth upon glass, they quickly made way for him ;

and in like manner also did the torturers and their men, for they were afraid.

9 And Sithron stood upright before David, King of Israel ; and before all his armed host, and all the priests.

10 And he cried with a loud voice, I am Bar-Kochbah !

11 So David, and all who were with him, marvelled exceedingly, and were in strange fear.

12 And Sithron said, O King of Israel, I also am of the children of Israel, though men know me not : I was Sithron, the son of Zelopholek, the astrologer of Hebron.

13 Behold, I am he who became mad about the stars.

14 Also, I am that Sithron who was the loving husband of a loving wife, even Milkah who sleepeth no longer in his arms.

15 And both of us were as those who seem mad, because we did not believe in the sanctity or sense of circumcision ; and because we evaded that barbarous rite.

16 Wherefore, O King ! the priests of Hebron have for six years persecuted us, pursuing us, and searching to seize us, or cause us to be put to death.

17 Then spake David, and said, I have heard of thee, and it would have been better for thee,

thou mad star-stricken one, befriended by the idolaters of Rabbath-Ammon, that thou hadst been slain by our priestly swords, than by such tortures as now await thee, thou blasphemer with the tongue of madness.

18 But Sithron continued to speak on, with eyes fixed upon the eyes of the King, even as though David had not spoken.

19 And Sithron said, The priests of Hebron have hunted after us, without ceasing ; and they have caused the death of our child, and the death of the wife of my bosom :

20 And these years of hunting were because I could not believe that Jehovah ever made so mean and cruel a Covenant.

21 Now the priests, and many others cried aloud, To the torture ! To the torture, with him ! wherefore do we endure these ravings ?

22 But the torturers were afraid of the white gleaming face, and mad figure before them ; and so were many others, for they thought Sithron was possessed of devils, and that if they killed him the devils would break forth, and enter into those who were nearest.

23 And David forbore, as yet, to order the tortures ; for even he also was afraid.

24 So Sithron continued to speak, getting more fierce in his looks, and standing more erect.

25 And he said, Behold, O King, the man who became mad by declaring aloud that the Real God of yonder Heavens, and of this earth, the Real God above yonder Sun, and above our Stars, and beyond all the Circling stars of Infinite Space, had never been down upon this earth like a man, to make a Covenant with a man by the cutting off a little circle of skin from the male parts of a child on the eighth day after its birth!

26 Now cried aloud all the priests, together with many others, To the torture! to the torture with this mad blasphemer, who is filled with devils.

27 But the King of Israel raised his hand to forbid this as yet; and he said to Joab, privily, Let be awhile; for peradventure this madman may prophesy.

28 The father of this fellow was of like madness, and so was his mother, as I have heard.

29 His wife also was to have been named Zillah, by reason of her mother's madness, who said that she was descended from Tubal Cain.

30 Many of these things have been told unto me; and now peradventure this naked fury may prophesy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1 Joab giveth other reasons for delay. 2 And Sithron scoffeth at the delay. 3 The torturers and soldiers are yet more afraid. 4 And David also is afraid. 5 Of the madness of him that was Sithron. 6 And his further ravings. 7 Death of Hanun and Heshlag. 8 A great confusion cometh upon all. 9 The lost one is borne away, and dieth in a happy spirit.

THEN Joab said to the King of Israel, There is also another reason for waiting a while.

2 It may be, that in this fool's ravings we shall gain some knowledge of hidden treasures; and afterwards thou canst put him to the worst tortures;

3 And in case he be possessed of devils, let him be tortured so closely beside Hanun who was King of Rabbah, and Heshlag the High Priest of Baal, that the devils shall enter into them, before they also are put to death.

4 And he that had been Sithron scoffed at the delay; and he laughed triumphantly, and spat at the torturers; and he set his face like a flint before the face of the King of Israel.

5 And blood gushed from his mouth, and from his ears, and trickled down the sharp bones of his naked shoulders.

6 And his ragged hair of blighted grass became stiff; and it twisted and curled up like unto horns that were alive;

7 And he stamped upon the ground, crying with a loud voice, Where is my wife! Where is our child!—

8 Here, here! under the ground, where ye have thrust them!

9 And the torturers and the soldiers, and all those round about, scuffled backwards, being afraid to turn their backs.

10 And Sithron said, There is no devil within me, but a far greater power, for I have a holy Spirit within me, even the breath of the Spirit of the Real God of Heaven, and of the Universe!

11 And I say unto ye all, Behold the King of Rabbah who standeth there with bare feet on the iron bedstead of the slaughtered giant-king of peaceful Bashan; and behold also the High Priest of Baal, who lieth there, naked and in bonds; both of them awaiting your tortures!

12 Those two men, whom ye call worshippers of false Gods, have listened to all that this fool and madman have said about the Real God of the Universe, with its Sun, and all its worlds of Light;

13 And verily I say unto ye all, these men

are worshippers of a Truer God of the Circle of Infinity, than the worldly God ye believe to have come down upon the earth whenever ye wanted his help, after having made a sacred Covenant out of a little ring of infant's skin.

14 Fools that ye are! beasts that ye are! blind blasphemers of the Real God above the Sun, the Earth, the Moon, and all the Stars! butchers of tens of thousands upon tens of thousands of your fellow men; and butchers now of all these bleeding bodies that lie around in mangled heaps, yet moving.

15 Then he that had thus spoken, staggered like one that is drunk, and he foamed at the mouth, and being able to utter only a few more words, he again defied the king of Israel, and all his priests.

16 And he cried unto David with his latest breath, Thou hanger upon trees of many scores of kings, each of whom was a more worthy king than thou! Thou male harlot and man-horse of many wives and concubines! Thou purchaser of Saul's daughter by the foul bribe of two hundred genital foreskins! Thou slayer of tens upon tens of thousands! go on with thy present tortures—thou man after Satan's own heart!

17 Now Joab snatched a spear from one of the soldiers, and hurled it with great wrath at the

madman called Sithron ; as did several others who bore spears ;

18 But their wrath and their fear were so great, that all the spears sang and wavered astray ;

19 But some of the spears smote both Hanun and Heshlag.

20 And the King of Rabbah, and the High Priest of Rabbah, turned their dying looks lovingly upon the Star-stricken, as to bid him farewell.

21 And the Star-stricken one went to them, and embraced them both as they gave up the ghost.

22 Then was David exceeding wroth, and he said, Take your swords some of you, and instantly bring me the head of yonder madman.

23 So Joab and others drew forth their swords, and the Star-stricken one, with a steadfast smile, went to meet them.

24 But before they were near enough to smite him, there came thick clouds of tawny smoke from the brick-kilns, and the houses that were nearest which had taken fire.

25 And long red tongues of flame came hissing and lapping out with the smoke, and began to encircle the king of Israel, and the great captains, and priests, and soldiers who were around and behind him.

26 Then were heard loud cries from the horse-men, whose horses dashed hither and thither, with white eyes, in their terror and suffocation ; and all the host of David rushed away to save themselves from the encircling flames.

26 And no one thought of anything but himself and the flames.

27 And amidst the fighting crowds in this great confusion, the Star-stricken one was borne away, he knew not whither ; for all consciousness had left him.

28 There was a whirlwind of men raging on all sides, even as a whirlwind from the four quarters rageth about.

29 And crowds wrestled with crowds, and masses of men trampled over masses of men that had been cast down, and cursed them if they fell or stumbled over them.

30 Now when his senses were come back to the Lost-one, he knew that he was dying, but he saw that it was night, by the stars that sparkled so brightly over his uplifted head.

31 And as he looked around him with failing life, and failing sight, he saw that he was lying not far from the ruined tower ;

32 And he crept and crawled towards it slowly on his hands and knees, with a revived and comforted heart.

33 And the Son of the Stars, the Lost-one among their too potent glories, even Bar-Kochbah, sought his marriage bed in the recess at the foot of the hollow tower ;

34 Even the same bed where slept Milkah, the wife of his soul, and Gilead their child.

35 And he gathered heaps of dry leaves and small boughs over him, and over them, while myriads of keen-eyed stars looked down upon them through the hollow tower.

36 And he that had been Sithron, with long sighs of sweet rest now, and to come, extended his enfolding arms over the grave of those who slept beneath ;

37 And he thanked and blessed and worshipped the God of All Above, as well as All on the earth, with a grateful heart for this happy end.

38 So Bar-Kochbah, even he that had been Sithron, died happily, after a troubled life, whereof the troubles were from causes never experienced by any man before.

39 Here endeth a Chronicle, writ by another foolish one in his generation ; and peradventure, after some centuries, he that was Nejmeb Safiyeh, that had been Sithron, that was Bar-Kochbah, may seem to rise again in the spirit.

40 And it may come to pass that the thoughts that appeared as mad thoughts, may take lead in

bringing about a mighty change, and a grander and a purer scope of mental sight among all mankind :

41 And the Jewish races, and the races of the great Jewish Revolutionist and Martyr, who founded a more pure and humane creed—even of him, who died upon a felon's cross, thrice fifty years before this Chronicle was writ,—may thereby become more like unto brothers, and spread their happy generations over the earth.

42 But lo! there will long be a great chasm between the two creeds :

43 And the last creed may be changed before the first creed passeth away.

THE END :

ALLAH AALEM.

